

# DHARMA

Man Religion Society Governance  
in  
Buddhism  
[Critically Examined and Explained]



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## Preface

More recent writings of mine, spreading over a period of about thirty years, more or less, which are collected in this volume, may be called essays in a sense. They are the product of a scheme of research in Buddhist studies contemplated by me over a period of nearly two decades. They reflect the way I think, the way I handle Buddhist teachings and the way I look at the accuracy or otherwise of what others say about Buddhism. And what people at large do with these teachings. The International Buddhist Research and Information Center [IBRIC] at the Narada Center was set up some time ago for the pursuit of such studies. Come what may out of it, could be any body's wish or prayer.

It is more than an exposure to others of what I have with me on this side. It is a genuine and honest endeavor to enlist others, irrespective of caste and creed, in a search to discover, for the total good of the world, man and bird and beast, the core and substance of the Buddha's teachings, covering a totality of areas like social philosophy, economic well-being, health and happiness here and now as well as transcendental aspirations for achievements hereafter, sooner or later, in course of time.

In this latter sense, I would choose to call my writings, which are subdivided here under four sections, lessons, one, two, three and so on. With a recorded history of nearly sixty years of teaching in universities, graduate schools and theological institutes, both in Sri Lanka and abroad, I enjoyed more my learning with my students than delivering lectures to others. All articles produced in this collection would reflect that inherent character, giving the reader the freedom, authoritatively though, to communicate with me and question me over every statement I make. We may honorably agree to disagree, as gentlemen. Thank you.

*Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo.*

*Loko hotu sukhī sadā.*

May the word of the Master last long in the world.

May the world be a happy place to live in.

Dhammavihari

18 May 2006

## Introduction

In all my teaching and writing on Buddhism, two things which I have always endeavored to respect are literary authenticity and historical consistency. These concepts in themselves need no commentaries from any body, within the class room or outside.

With us, in Buddhist studies, the word literary is not used only in the sense of written material. With the commencement of Buddhism, there is not the slightest doubt that a consistent oral tradition recorded events in the life of the Buddha, what he did as the Enlightened One, and his teachings etc.

This fact of oral literary traditions is not to be contested in India where, very much anterior even to the time of the Buddha, a voluminous religious literature of the Vedic tradition was orally preserved in the Sanskrit language. This included diverse strata of religious literature such as the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upanishads. Let those who know the methodology whereby this was done know it. And those who know less about it, doubt it.

In the tradition of the Buddhists too, this practice was smoothly and successfully carried on, with Venerable Ananda heading the group, as it were. Both internal evidence of the Pali texts and the record of the First Buddhist Council [or *Paṭhama* or *Pañcasatī Saṅgīti*] as recorded in the Culla Vagga [Vin.II.286f.] testify to this. We have already established elsewhere [ University of Ceylon Review - 1957, Vol. XV. Nos. 3 & 4 ] that this Council knew of the existence of five divisions of the Sutta Piṭaka, in spite of a much later talk of Four Nikaya [*catasso sangiyiyo*], along side Five Nikayas, in the Milindapañha [ *Te ca tepiṭakā bhikkhū pañcanekāyikā pi ca Catunekāyikā c'eva Nāgasenaṃ purakkharuṃ*. Miln. Trenckner p. 22 ]. Or as Commentator Buddhaghosa puts it *Suttanta-piṭake catasso saṅgītiyo* at DA.I.14.

This record also speaks of the recital at this First Council of the two divisions



of the *Buddha-vacana* as Dhamma and Vinaya, no more no less. Beginning with this, we have more than enough evidence to be fairly certain about the authenticity or otherwise of what goes under the name of Buddha's own word, what he delivered to the world down here, during his life time of forty-five years.

The basis of all my studies and research have been primarily the Dhamma and the Vinaya referred to above. Buddhist scholars of all ages have known about the later addition to the authentic *Buddha-vacana* of books, even of deviant traditions like the Buddhavaṃsa, Cariyāpiṭaka and Apadāna. Buddhist literary history knows also about their rejection by keener students like the Dīgha-Bhāṇakas as against their acceptance by the Majjhima-Bhāṇakas [ See the records of the great Commentator Buddhaghosa at DA.I.15].

My writings on the Dhamma in this collection are classified under four headings : Man, Religion, Society and Governance. It would be observed that all my Buddhist studies are centered on the problem of the humans, referred to by the Buddha himself under the name *ayaṃ loko* [ as *kicchaṃ vat'āyaṃ loko āpanno* at SN. II. 5 ]. Hence I begin Section I with the Buddhist analysis of the genesis of man, his continuance through life, what his death means and his being born again.

The Buddha delivered to man a message for his deliverance [*nissaraṇa*] out of the ills of *Saṃsāra*. This gives Buddhism, as is known today, the character of a religion. I undertake in Section II to examine the functional validity of whatever is being done under that name, namely religion. I have relentlessly indicated many pathological conditions in the body religion of Buddhism in Sri Lanka today. I clearly indicate that these so-called religious activities [ or religious rituals as they are often called ], do not lead in the direction of liberation in Nirvana. One cannot over stress their seriousness and I call for immediate surgery, to be undertaken prior to further infection of this cancerous situation.

Section III deals with many areas of society : utilization of man power,

economic resources, organic worth and dignity of human institutions, ethics of non-partisan good living etc. In Section IV, I pray for a unitary concept of society, in spite of ethnic and religious diversities, as well as violently conflicting political ideologies which are increasingly becoming the bane of mankind, at times enjoying undue state patronage, for reasons not unknown to the spell bound people of the land. All problems are critically examined in terms of the Dhamma and explained in the light of what is happening around us.

Finally I take up for examination and diagnosis the *malaise pathetique* of governance in Sri Lanka today. I do use world standards for this. They are readily available in the teachings of the Buddha.

## Section One – Man

### Lesson 1

#### Birth, Life, and Death and Being Born Again

With the new advances in the field of medical science like test-tube babies and Caesarean deliveries, to most people around us birth is a matter of very little concern. Cloning takes us even a stage further. But the scientists themselves in their passing remarks drive us to take a second look at the phenomenon of birth in its entirety. It may be accepted without serious challenge that through the process of newly evolved cloning, the likeness of Mozart the musician may be created. But some of those very scientists are nearly positive and strike a note of warning that Mozart the musician himself may not be regenerated.

In another area relating to the birth of humans we have heard it said, more than thirty years ago, that 'there is every reason to believe that the mind of the unborn child in the mother's womb is pre-monitored.' But to us Buddhists, the birth of a human is much more multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Take it or leave it. It matters very little to either party. We shall now proceed to examine the process from the Buddhist angle.

We concern ourselves here primarily with the genesis of human life. We look upon it as a self-operating process, continuing through time and space [*sandhāvati saṃsarati* ... Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta at MN. I. 256]. The problem at hand is serious enough not to prompt us to look into the when and where of it. The results of this process, consequentially not being too gratifying or delightful, the Buddhists are fundamentally concerned with the process itself and its products. But they seek not to find the time and place of its origin. We are fully

aware that we are confronted with the problems of life here and now. On the other hand, in our concern for its total termination, which alone is our burden as a religion. we begin with an analysis of its origin in this very existence [*Atthi idappaccayā jarāmaraṇan'ti iti puṭṭhena satā ...* See DN. II. 55 ff.].

Each individual human life is viewed as journeying by itself, through time and space [without any alliance or allegiance to a saviour or protector, or without being directed by any known or unknown power [*attāṇo loko anabhissaro* Raṭṭhapāla Sutta at MN. II. 68]. This journey itself and the vastness through which it operates is called *saṃsāra*. We humans are individually caught and propelled within it through the momentum called *kamma* or volitional activity which we ourselves generate in our very process of living, through our own actions via thought, word and deed. This in turn is no more and no less than our reactions to the stimuli which the world keeps bombarding at us through our sense organs.

This involvement of ours with the world, whether it be in the direction of being attracted to or repelled by [*anurodha-virodhaṃ samāpanno -* Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta at MN. I. 266] is referred to in Buddhist terms as grasping or *upādāna*. It is this *upādāna* or grasping at things of the world, in fulfilment of our sensual desires, both positively and negatively, which feeds or contributes to our *saṃsāric* continuance [*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*]. This dynamic body of action [the fivefold psychic or mind-created body] is called the *pañca-upādāna-kkhandha* in marked contrast to the relatively static [physically existent] human body of ours of five aggregates or *pañca-kkhandha*.

It is at this point where we are told that each one of us has a credit balance of *saṃsāric* continuance or *bhava* and through that have taken upon ourselves what we would call a birth or *jāti* in a state of existence, that we take up our study of the concept of birth. *Saṃsāric* continuance of everyone of us has necessarily to produce a birth or *jāti* in some form of existence somewhere [*bhava-paccayā jāti*] until we, through our own endeavour, terminate the process finally in

Nirvana. In Buddha's own words in the Ariyapariyesana Sutta, this termination is described as `This is my last birth. I have no more continuance in the life process of *bhava*'[... *ayaṃ antimā jāti natthi'dāni punabbhavo* - MN. I. 167].

These two adjacent concepts of *bhava* and *jāti* now being clearly presented, is there any need for preachers of Buddhism or for those who listen to these masters to insist that there can be no concept of rebirth in Buddhism? Better we keep away from such Quixotic adventures of fighting windmills in the pursuit of Buddhist research. *Bhava* is the force of continuance in *saṃsāra*. *Jāti* is the process of its manifestation in some form of existence in time and space. Make no mistake, while explaining the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, of identifying the renewal of the wear and tear of one's physical body during one life time, within or without, as an aspect of the Buddhist concept of *jāti*.

Of every human birth it is said that it is of parental origin [*mātāpettikasambhavo* - Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta at MN. II. 17], i.e. with the parental contribution of the sperm and the ovum, and that the new born life is made up of the four great basic elements [*cātum-mahābhūti*]. This newly-formed life-potential [not a complete real life so far] which goes under the name zygote has instinctively to find a lodging place for its subsequent growth within the mother's womb [or even accidentally find itself lodged in the Fallopian tube].

For the genesis and development of a new human life within the mother, the Buddhists assert with clarity and conviction, that yet another factor, beyond the role of the parents, must necessarily step in. For the successful establishment of a foetal body within the mother [call it conception or implanting], the *Saṃsāric* Life-carrier Consciousness or *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* [See Āṇaṇjasappāya Sutta at MN. II. 262] of a *saṃsāra-goer* [or *gandabbo/gantabbo*, i.e. one who is still journeying and is destined to be born again and again - Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta at MN. I.265 f.], has to be coupled with or entrenched in the newly-formed zygote. The early authentic Buddhist texts are clear and eloquent on this.

The Mahānidāna sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya [DN. II. 63] states in no uncertain terms that `If the *viññāṇa* [i.e. *saṃsāric* component] does not descend into the mother's abdominal cavity or *mātu-kucchi* [i.e. in the mother's womb or even accidentally in the Fallopian tube], the *nāmarūpa* within it, i.e. the foetal embryo provided by the parents, will not get consolidated [*Viññāṇaṃ va hi Ānanda mātukucchiṃ na okkasmissatha api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samucchissathā 'ti*] and will not `initiate its growth into a human life' [*nāmarūpaṃ itthattāya abhinibbattissati*. Ibid.]. It is after this successful combination of *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* [from within and without] that the physiological growth of the sense organs and the concurrent functioning of the brain seems to begin.

Buddhist texts almost say `The *viññāṇa*'s [i.e. of the trans-*saṃsāric* psychic-component *viññāṇa*'s] descent into the mother's womb signals, as it were, to the life-embryo which goes under the name of *nāma-rūpa* to commence its development of sense organs or *saḷāyatana* [possibly together with the brain, and that also possibly simultaneously]'. This acceptance, by each individual *viññāṇa*, of *nāmarūpa* which is the down-to-earth physical component to be the basis for the commencement of human life, through their successful union marks, according to our early authentic texts, the genesis of human life. The Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta [MN. I. 261] details out this developmental process as follows, stating that the sense organs grow out of the *nāmarūpa*: *Saḷāyatanañ c'idaṃ bhikkhave kim-nidānaṃ kiṃsamudayaṃ kiṃjātikaṃ kiṃpabhavaṃ. Saḷāyatanaṃ nāmarūpa-nidānaṃ ... nāmarūpa-pabhavaṃ*.

It is to be noted that in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* series, the term *nāmarūpa* is used to refer to the parental contribution in the form of the sperm and the ovum [producing the zygote], as a complement to an individual's life-carrier *saṃsāric* consciousness or *viññāṇa-sota* [Sampasādaniya Sutta at DN. III. 105] which needs to get coupled with it, saying *viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpaṃ*. This implies here undoubtedly the trans-*saṃsāric* continuity of the life process of each and every one. The Mahānidāna Sutta is very emphatic on the mutual

interdependence or reciprocity of these two items of *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* for the genesis and continuance of *saṃsāric* human life [... *ettāvatā vaṭṭaṃ vaṭṭati itthattam paññāpanāya yadidaṃ nāma-rūpaṃ saha viññāṇena*. See DN. II. 56 ff.]. The Saṃyutta Nikaya too [SN.II.112 ff.] records a delightful discussion between Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita where they deliberate, in a study of the chain of Causal Genesis, about the inter-dependence of these two items [of these two items alone, i.e. of *nāmarūpa* and *viññāṇa*]. That neither of them can exist without the other.

Thereafter, specially after delivery into the world as a new born human, the term *nāmarūpa* seems also to be used to refer to the psycho-physical totality of the human being. It is obviously in this sense that the Attadaṇḍa Sutta of the Suttanipāta uses the term *nāmarūpa* when it says that 'He who has no notions whatsoever of I or mine [*mamāyitaṃ*] with regard to his individual self or *nāmarūpa*, has no need to grieve over things that, in reality, exist not [*asatā ca na socati*].'

*Sabbaso nāmarūpasmim̐ yassa natthi mamāyitaṃ  
asatā ca na socati sa ve loke na jīyati.*

Sn. v. 950

Now a human life has commenced in the world, through something more than a mere union of a mother and a father. To the Buddhist, it should be well known that cognitive awareness of humans is not merely a matter of sense organs like the eye and the ear being linked with objects of the world like shapes and sounds. Consciousness, now functionally segmented as the need arises, severally for each of the sense organs, [and called *viññāṇa-kāya*] are referred to as being six in number for the six different sense organs at MN. III. 216 in the Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta. Elsewhere they are referred to as *viññāṇa-bhāga* and are said to be five in number for the five *upādānakkhandha* at MN. I.190 in the Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta. In the cognitive process, as they function, they all

have to severally join the above two [namely the sense organs and the sense objects in the world], thus producing cognitive contact called *phassa* [*tinnam saṅgati phasso* at MN. I. 111 in the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta]. The Mahanidana Sutta at DN. II. 56, very briefly, but we believe very correctly too, presents *phassa* as the outcome of *nāmarūpa*. It is this *phassa* that finally produces cognitive or sensory awareness or *vedanā* [*phassa paccayā vedanā*].

This marks the real commencement of human life-activity, of responding to and communicating with the world. This process seems to be unmistakably taking place while the unborn baby is still within the mother's womb. For it is said, according to current medical evidence, that a baby, by the twentieth week within the mother's womb, is capable of hearing sounds of the external world and taking note of them. It is said to be recorded that such babies, after their birth, give indications of their pre-natal awareness. [At this pre-natal stage, whether it is merely a reflex reaction of receiving and recording, or involves a judgemental process, we are compelled to leave it unanswered.].

In the light of what has been said so far about the *saṃsāric* process of continuous existence, it becomes unmistakably clear that the mind of the unborn child in the mother's womb is neither radiant nor immaculately pure [*pabhassara*]. It just cannot be so. We have already indicated that almost at conception a *saṃsāric* component by the name of *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* [also referred to as *viññāṇa-sota* at DN. III. 105 in the Āṇaṅjasappāya Sutta] becomes part and parcel of every new-born life. The Mahānidāna Sutta quoted above has indicated this very clearly. *Saṃsāric* beings are rolling on in the life stream called *saṃsāra* because they are enwrapped and enveloped in the fettering conditions of ignorance and craving [... *avijjā-nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhā-saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ* - SN. II. 178].

They are therefore contaminated on account of their underlying defiling traits, referred to at times as *āsaya* and *anusaya* which are inherently there in every new born child [*anuseti tv'ev'assa sakkāyadiṭṭhānusayo* - Mahāmāluṅkyaputta



Sutta - MN. I. 433]. These defilements are also referred to as *kilesa*. It is in the final attainment of Nirvana through enlightenment that *kilesa* are eradicated [*paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā hontī*- Kīṭāgiri Sutta at MN. I. 477] and the *anusaya* cease to exist [*ahaṃkāra-mamiṃkāra-mānānusayā nā'ssu* - AN. I. 132].

We have already explained above, in terms of Buddhist teachings, the origin and growth of sense organs in a human foetal body and the development of the process of cognitive awareness in the very early stages. Completing its specific period of growth within the mother's womb, a human comes to be born in due course [i.e. *jāti* | *abhinibbatti* etc.]. Having now witnessed the arrival of a new human into the world, we refer to the event as being born in our midst.

We are fully aware of the pre-natal commencement of human life, including at least partial cognitive awareness, within the mother's womb. Somebody from somewhere is born here again. With this Buddhist awareness of the life process, we fail to find a better word in English for this than re-birth. This new-born psycho-physical entity consisting of five different functional aggregates or *pañca-kkhandha* has come to be called a being or *satta* as expressed by Therī Vajirā in the Saṃyutta Nikaya [*Evaṃ khandhesu santesu hoti satto'ti sammuti* - SN. I. 135].

Taking for granted the assumed unity and identity of this amassed conglomeration called the *pañca-kkhandha*, let us now examine how it acquires for itself a reality within itself. We have already agreed upon the use of the term *nāmarūpa* for this totality. Shifting now our attention from the *saṃsāric* aspect to a single life time, we locate a human between his birth and death. We have already taken note above of the fact that it is the joint operation of the *pañcakkhandha* together with the *pañcupādānakkhandha* which makes human life a living reality, in the midst of men and women as we meet them in the world. Acts of communication between the humans and the world they live in begins here. It has to be accepted as a basic position in Buddhism that all humans who

have reached the goal of Nirvana, here and now, have exploded the myth of the self-created *pañca-upādānakkhandha*.

Therefore it is time now for us to make a closer analytical study of the five aggregates of the *pañcakkhandha*. They are i. *rūpa*, ii, *vedanā*, iii. *saññā*, iv. *saṅkhāra* and v. *viññāṇa*. Falling back on *nāmarūpa* as constituting the totality of the human, the word *rūpa* therein would invariably take over the *rūpa* content of the *pañcakkhandha* within its fold. The net result of this has to be that nos. ii, iii, iv, and v of the *pañcakkhandha* division, namely *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*, all have to come within the category of *nāma*. Thus the item number i, namely *rūpa*, would signify the physical basis of human life while the other four constitute the totality of the cognitive and consequent psychic processes [i.e. *nāma*]. Our becoming aware of the world we live in, our reacting to the stimuli we receive therefrom and the cumulative effect of all these on us would come under these latter four.

But *nāmarūpa* as constituting the totality of the human being is not divisible into self-existing separate entities as *nāma* and *rūpa* or as five different aggregates or *khandhas*. They seem to work inter-relatedly within each other and one another. As sense organs like the eye and the ear, they are undeniably separate identifiable entities. But the ability to see and hear are no more than latent capacities associated with the physical entities, i.e. the sense organ and the sense object. Eye consciousness is a sequential derivative product, causally generated. So is it with all sense organs.

Starting with the physically located or *rūpakhandha*-bound eye and the ear and other sense organs [barring *mano* or mind whose materiality must necessarily be kept at a minimum], the cognitive process in the human life-activity begins with item number two in the *pañcakkhandha* series, namely *vedanā*. It is our conviction that *vedanā* in this context of the *pañcakkhandha* is definitely not feeling or sensation as pleasant, unpleasant etc. [*sukha-dukkha-adukkhamasukha*]. *Vedanā* here, we are inclined to believe, is no more than the

initial and elementary and vague awareness, through our sense organs, of the world outside. This is brought about by the first exposure to the world through *phassa* or contact [*phassa-paccayā vedanā*. For details see MN. I. 111 f.]. What gives clarity and precision to this first stage of cognitive awareness is the succeeding one of *saññā* or precise knowing [*yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti*. Ibid.]. The Madhupiṇḍika Sutta [MN. I. 108 ff.] which we are quoting here offers one of the finest studies on the psycho-ethical progress in the development of cognitive awareness in a human being.

*Saññā*, through its normal process of precise knowing or *sañjānāti* about the observable things in the world [i.e. moving over from *vedanā* to *saññā*], is literally the stage on which the entire drama of human life is enacted. All modes of planning [*vitakketi*] in life and for life begin here, after determining the nature of the world according to our own judgement [*yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi*]. Whatever patterns of behaviour that come out of such speculative planning [i.e. *vitakka*], if they contribute to the prolongation of the *saṃsāric* journeying of humans, then they are said to be causing *papañca*, i.e. thwarting or impeding the path of spiritual liberation.

This *papañca* operates in all areas of sensory reaction [i.e. in all six areas from the eye to the mind] which having had their origin in the physical basis of sense organs, move over to the areas of cognitive awareness and consequent judgement. We may venture here to translate *papañca* as erratic judgement which we unknowingly do in our reaction to the sensory stimuli of the world. [Note this statement of the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta: ... *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññā saṅkhā samudācaranti atītānāgapaccuppannesu cakkhu-viññeyyesu rūpesu ... mano-viññeyyesu dhammesu* MN. I. 112].

The sensory activity of these six organs is also referred to elsewhere [SN. IV. 43] as avenues of sensory contact or *cha phassāyatanāni*. Here it is specifically stated that a Buddhist disciple who does not get a proper grasp of the total

functioning of the sensory avenues is far from being a true Buddhist [*ārakā so imasmā dhammavinayā*] and that he cannot be reckoned as having lived properly his religious life [*avusitaṃ tena brahmacariyaṃ*]. What one is expected to do as a Buddhist is to know well and truly [*yathābhūtaṃ*] how *phassa* or sensory contact of all faculties have their origin [*samudaya*], how they cease to be [*atthagama*], their gratification [*assāda*] and their evil consequences [*ādīnava*] and finally the complete liberation from them [*nissaraṇa*]. This true and correct vision is described as the ability to really see all channels of cognitive activity [i.e. every one of them], without an ill-gotten solidified concept of self identity as this is mine [*etaṃ mama*], this is me [*eso'hamasm*] and this is myself [*eso me attā'ti*]. He who gains this correct vision makes an end of *dukkha* [... *evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ bhavissati es'ev'anto dukkhassā'ti*. loc. cit.].

The Madhupiṇḍika Sutta quoted above goes further to tell us that in reacting to sensory stimuli which we receive through our six sense organs, our religious culture requires that we exercise disciplinary control over ourselves and i. avoid jubilation and over rejoicing [*ettha ce n'atthi abhinanditabbam*], ii. not welcome and accept them with adoration [... *abhivaditabbam*] and iii. not hang around and linger in their bosom [... *ajjhositabbam*]. The sutta assures us that this should terminate all our ills in life which stand in the way of our liberation [*es'ev'anto rāga- paṭigha- diṭṭhi- vicikicchā- māna- bhavarāga- avijjā ānusayānaṃ*].

Similarly the termination of even socially calamitous patterns of behaviour which humans invariably enter upon like violent use of weapons and abusive vituperative language is said to be within the reach of humans if only they are careful about the way their minds work as they react to the stimuli as well as to the seductions of the world [*es'eva anto daṇḍādāna- satthādāna- kalaha- viggaha- vivāda- tuvantuva- pesuñña- musāvādānaṃ*. Ibid. 113]. It also adds that at this stage all these unwholesome states or *akusalā* shall completely cease to be [*etth'ete akusalā pāpakā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti*. loc.cit.]. There can be no more and no less in the spiritual aspirations of a true Buddhist.

An equally eloquent sutta, namely the Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya [MN. I. 266-7] describes this same phenomenon of the genesis of *dukkha* and the prolongation of *saṃsāric* continuance with slight differences of presentation. Describing in unmistakable detail the origin of human life in a mother's womb [supplementing in a way the Mahānidāna Sutta we have studied above - DN. Ī. 56 ff.], this sutta details out how unguarded reaction to sensory stimuli, through various stages of psycho-ethical decadence and breakdown ultimately contribute to the amassing of *saṃsāric dukkha*.

Among its brilliant observations, the sutta [MN. I. 266 f.] tells us how the human eye gets attracted towards pleasant sights and gets repelled by unpleasant ones [... *piyarūpe rūpe sārājati appiyarūpe byāpajjati*]. One who views the world in that manner is not mindfully alert about his body [*anupaṭṭhita-kāya-satī*]. He is of limited mind development [*paritta-cetaso*]. He lacks a true vision of the release of the mind through wisdom wherein he could completely rid himself of evil states of mind [*pāpakā akusalā dhammā*]. Being thus torn between attraction and repulsion [*anurodha-virodham samāpanno* - MN. I. 266], the sutta says that such a person's reaction to sensory stimuli of the world is necessarily one of acceptance, whether in the direction of attraction or of repulsion.

The sutta further says that in reacting in this manner to the three-fold *vedanā*, i.e. *sukha dukkha adukkhamasukha*, what one is doing is no more and no less than *abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati* [MN. I. 266]. This is made out to be erratic and incorrect reaction to sensory stimuli, leading to *saṃsāric* prolongation, along with all the ills that follow.

In our study of the *Pañcakkhandha* series, we have up to now come down from the physical basis of life known to us as *rūpa* [i], and in association with it tracked down the initial successive psychic processes of *vedanā* [ii] and *saññā* [iii]. These two, at times, appear to be intermingled and appear to operate conjointly, one accommodating by itself the functions of the other. So far, up to the stage of *saññā*, the human cognitive process seems to run on an unbiased

neutral track, marking different stages of cognition.

While the *Pañca-kkhandha* series gives us *sañkhāra* [iv] as the immediate successor to *saññā* [iii], we have shown above from other sources that many sub-stages of cognitive activity, with a clearly psycho-ethical relevance, are constantly at work in the mind of the unenlightened human. *Vitakka* and *papañca* of the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta [at MN.I. 112] are good examples of this.

Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta [MN.I. 266 f.] shows that erratic handling of the stimuli of the world, after taking possession of the data provided via *vedanā* and *saññā*, there arise in the mind of the human many *saṃsāra*-binding weaknesses like *nandī* or delightful attachment, *upādāna* or grasping in the direction of *saṃsāric* continuance and *bhava* or *saṃsāric* continuance itself.

Having precisely recognised [*sañjānāti*] identities of things in the world like sights, sounds and smells, at the stage of *saññā*, the human mind seems to proceed to speculate on the lines of action it should follow in response to the stimuli offered by the world. Buddhist thinking indicates that the human mind works at this stage primarily on the duality of acceptance and rejection [Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta - *anurodha-virodhaṃ samāpanno* at MN. I. 266]. This we believe is what comes under the term *vitakketi*. We would consider the verb speculate as a very near equivalent to it.

The stage of mental activity following *vedanā* and *saññā* is undoubtedly a very slippery area of movement where a person of immature judgement and uncultivated mind can run into serious trouble. Here one is likely to make erratic judgements with regard to all stimuli received through the sensory channels which in turn invariably lead to prolonging continuance in *Samāsāra*. This process of thinking, commencing after *saññā*, and proceeding via *vitakka* [*vitakketi*], comes to be called *papañceti* [See Madhupiṇḍika at MN.I.112]. On the other hand, Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta [MN.I. 266] spells out briefly but precisely this calamitous deflection as follows.

Torn between attraction and repulsion [*anurodha-virodham samāpanno*], a man or woman of the world as he or she responds to feelings or sensations [*vedanā*], whether they be pleasant [*sukhā*], unpleasant [*dukkhā*] or neither [*adukkham-asukhā*], would i. respond with exceeding joy [*abhinandatī*], ii. in a spirit of respectful welcome [*abhivadatī*] and iii. linger in and around them with longing [*ajjhosāya titthatī*]. The result is a deep sense of joy and delight [*nandī*]. This delight in sensory stimuli [*vedanāsu*] is said to lead to grasping or *upādāna*. And this in turn leads to *bhava* or continuance in *saṃsāra*. This phenomenon of *bhava* is undoubtedly the fountain head from where all ills of life like birth [*jāti*], decay and death [*jarāmaraṇa*], and griefs, lamentations etc. etc. [*soka-parideva-dukkha-domassūpāyāsā*] flow forth [... *evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*. MN. I. 266].

Having by now seen the progress of mental activity through the cognitive process [definitely in a downward direction], commencing either at *vedanā* or at *saññā*, we discover therein the degradation of the human in the direction of *saṃsāra* prolongation and *dukkha* amassing. If we now return to our scrutiny of the *Pañcakkhandha* series, we cannot but be convinced that the item no. iv of the series, namely *sañkhāra*, totally accommodates all items of malformed thinking patterns which we humans indulge in [*vitakketi, papañceṭṭi, sārājati, byāpajati* etc.]. They are all conducive to binding humans in the *saṃsāric* tangle rather than liberating them from it.

Now if we take a look at the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* series which deals with our *saṃsāra*-journeying, and examine closely its first three items, namely *avijjā*, *sañkhāra* and *viññāṇa*, we discover that *sañkhāra* in both series [i.e. *Pañcakkhandha* and *Paṭiccasamuppāda*] has to be undeniably the same. This bundle of vicious mental activity [i.e. *sañkhārā*], resulting from *avijjā* or lack of true vision or *yathābhūta-ñāṇa*, comes to be called *sañkhāra* [*avijjā-paccayā sañkhārā*]. *Sañkhāra* generates the fuel for *saṃsāric* continuance. It is the high-powered forward gear of humans which takes them through the perilous journey

of *saṃsāra*.

*Saṅkhāra* of each one of us continually builds up and nurtures [*saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*] each one's life-carrier consciousness or *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa*, enabling it to push human life from one birth to another through *bhava* [*bhavapaccayā jāti*]. This is what makes sense in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* series when it says *saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*. *Viññāṇa* plus *nāmarūpa* in this context marks the unmistakable joint-link between two life units [external from the preceding life and internal in the genesis of new life in a mother's womb] of a human in the *saṃsāric* journey in *bhava*.

*Paṭiccasamuppāda* is well aware of this trans-*saṃsāric* process. Pursuing further the line of argument of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, its activities during a single life-time of a human proceed as far as *upādāna-paccayā bhavo*, all these being set in motion by a living individual. We believe that this comprehensive regenerative power which gives rise to life again and again is vested in *saṅkhāra*. These last two items of *upādāna* and *bhava* compels a human to be born into a new life [*jāti*], its grade as *sugati* or *duggati* being left to be decided in terms of one's *karma* accumulation [*yathābhataṃ evaṃ nikkhitto* at MN. I. 71].

In our analysis of the *Pañcakkhandha*, we now come to its last item or no. v. in the series, namely *Viññāṇa*. Associated with human life [that being, for obvious reasons, our main concern here], we discern three distinct phases of *viññāṇa* which are connected with human life. A human being as he is referred to by the name *nāma-rūpa*, one immediately reckons with his psycho-physical duality. Whatever is physical in the human body, it is taken up by the *rūpakhandha*. Therefore all psychic functioning within the human entity must fall within the term *nāma*.

In the *Pañcakkhandha* series, items ii, iii, and iv [i.e. *vedanā*, *saññā* and *saṅkhāra*] indicate various stages of developing cognitive activity within the human body. We have pointed out the role of *viññāṇa* in this area of activity. We



have also discovered and discussed above that *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* are, in terms of Buddhist thinking, interdependent and must co-exist. Therefore *viññāṇa* in the *Pañcakkhandha* series as no. v. must play a complementary role to *rūpa* as no. i. Note how convincingly the Sāmaññaphala Sutta puts it at DN. I. 76 when it says `This is my physical body provided by my parents ... This *viññāṇa* of mine is lying herein, bound and involved with it' [*Ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī ... idaṅca pana me viññāṇaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhan'ti.*].

In the sub-stages of development in cognitive awareness, *viññāṇa* was shown to be segmented into six to serve the different sense organs which are six in number - *Cha viññāṇakāyā veditabbā* in the Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta. See MN, III. 216]. Here we have the Mahāvedalla Sutta [at MN. I. 295] giving us details with regard to the cognitive functioning of our sense organs. As we begin, let it be noted that this sutta in its analysis, takes into account only the five external sense organs [*Pañc'imāni āvuso indriyāni nānā - visayāni nānā - gocarāni na aññamaññassa gocara - visayaṃ paccaṇubhonti seyyathīdaṃ cakkhu'ndriyaṃ sot'indriyaṃ...kāyindriyaṃ.*]. The very important lesson which comes to us from the ancient wisdom of the Buddha is that the activities of these five different sense organs [or the channels on which they operate] do not, by themselves, experience the outcome of one another [i.e. the eye of the ear, or the ear of the nose etc. etc.] because each is different from the other.

The question is then asked as to who experiences [*paccaṇubhoti*] these sensory inputs/outputs or who provides an abode or co-ordinating centre to these diverse sensory functions or their inputs/outputs. [*Imesaṃ kho āvuso pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ nānāvisayānaṃ ... kiṃ paṭisaraṇaṃ ko ca nesaṃ gocaravisayaṃ paccaṇubhoti*]. Scientifically, this indeed is a very pertinent question. Buddhism, more than two and a half millennia ago has provided, we believe, an unassailable answer. It is the mind which, in our Buddhist texts, goes under the name of *mano* which plays this role [*Imesaṃ kho āvuso pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ ... mano paṭisaraṇaṃ. Mano ca nesaṃ gocaravisayaṃ paccaṇubhoti.* MN. I. 295].

It is undoubtedly because of this reason that the mind or *mano* as the internal sense organ plays the role of recorder, processor and container of all sensory data received through the cognitive process of the five external sense organs that *mano* does not require a segmented *viññāṇa-bhāga* to assist it in its own cognitive activities. But perhaps because *mano* has to handle its own internal raw material which goes under the name of *dharmā*, suttas like the Madhupiṇḍika at MN. I. 112 also refer at times to a *mano-viññāṇa* [names *viññāṇa-kāya* and *viññāṇa-bhāga* not being used here with reference to *mano*].

One should note here the serious discrepancy between the Mahāvedalla and the Mahācattālīsaka in referring differently to the segmented *viññāṇas* as five and six. One should also record here a vital bit of information provided by the Mahāvedalla Sutta in drawing a distinction between *mano* as a handler of gross down-to-earth sensory data and *mano* at a transcendently developed level when it is said to be able to discern the planes of the three *arūpī jhānas* [MN. I. 296].

This tremendously important role of the mind or *mano* has to be examined further. *Mano* is more than a sense organ, although it is listed at times together with the other five external ones [*mano-chaṭṭhā* at SN. I. 16 and Sn. v. 171]. It is a co-ordinator which links up sensory data transmitted via other organs. To make knowledge of the world more meaningful to the observer, it has necessarily to do quite a bit of processing such as combining shapes with sounds and colours with smells. A distantly seen drum could be coupled with formerly heard sounds. Colours of distantly seen flowers could be coupled with the fragrance of formerly smelt flowers. This experiencing is what is meant by *paccanubhoti*.

This processing of sensory inputs can be done, as we have noted above, only in the repository of the mind [*paṭisaraṇaṃ*], and never on the way. Of the different sense organs [*nānā-visaya*], the pathways are said to be different [*nānā-gocara*]. They never cross one another's path [*Na aññamaññassa gocaravisayaṃ paccanubhontī*]. In consequence of this process, the mind or

*mano* comes to possess the totality of sensory data of a life time. This we would call existential experience or experience gathered in the very process of living. The Buddhists, we have no doubt, have to reckon also with a *saṃsāric* stock-in-trade as well which every new-born inherits by way of *āsaya* and *anusaya*. These jointly provide the raw material, i.e. subject matter which the mind [*mano*], as a sense faculty would offer for its diverse activities. This then would fall into the category known as *dhammā* and would serve the functioning mind as *rūpa* or forms would serve the eye.

Focussing now our attention elsewhere for a moment, we would here refer to the very first verse of the Dhammapada which runs as follows:

`*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā mano seṭṭhā manomayā.*' Dhp. vv. 1 & 2. We would translate it as `All contents of our thinking or *dhammā* are heralded or put forward by the mind. They are dominated by the mind. They are processed in the mind.' These obviously have to be the first words of warning or first words of admonition that a religion like Buddhism could give to its adherents, anywhere, any time. Those who really know the prestigious position which the Dhammapada came to hold in the early phases of its history in the world, in places like Central Asia and China, in the early centuries of the Christian era, would appreciate its making this presentation of its basic theme at its very beginning, namely in verses 1 & 2.

On the evidence presented so far we would now naturally come to the conclusion that *viññāṇa*, at no stage of its functioning ever plays the role of a moral governor who makes value judgements. The role of *viññāṇa* thus seems to be no more than to record, carry across and present the total of human mental activities at the needed moment. This is done both here and now during our present living process, as well as across *saṃsāra*, from death to birth again, until it perishes totally, terminating human life in *saṃsāra*, on the attainment of Nirvana [*viññāṇassa nirodhena etth'etaṃ uparujjhati* - Kevaḍḍha Sutta at DN. I. 223].

An interesting statement in the Mahāvedalla Sutta compels us to make a

further observation on the role of *viññāṇa* in the life of a human. We have discussed above the process of gradual development of cognitive awareness from *phassa*, via *vedanā* to *saññā*, the results so far being neutral and unbiased, until we come to *vitakka* and *papañca* both of which are corrosive and corruptive. The Mahāvedalla takes the processes *vedanā*, *saññā* and *viññāṇa* as a connected integrated series [*samsatthā*] in the cognitive process which cannot be differentiated [*na ca labbhā ... vinibbhujjitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetum* - MN. I. 293].

The very first observation we would make here while talking about *viññāṇa* is that we cannot speak of human life without reckoning with *viññāṇa* as the indispensable complement to *rūpa* which is the physical component in the psycho-physical totality of life. We have by now stressed over and over again that the original concept of *nāmarūpa* itself in the mother's womb [Mahānidāna Sutta at DN. II. 63] implied the totality of the material component of a new life-to-be, looking forward to the arrival of its psychic complement of the incoming *samsāric viññāṇa* [loc. cit.].

Now as we look at the *Pañcakkhandha* series, we are compelled to observe that items one and five therein [i.e. i. *rūpa* and v. *viññāṇa*] must play the same complementary roles to each other in making human life a living reality. *Viññāṇa*, as much as *rūpa*, in the *Pañcakkhandha* series, therefore cannot play a subsidiary role, getting only twenty per cent [20 %] credit, as it were, in the total transaction of living. Even in the Mahānidāna Sutta, it is only after the descent or arrival of *viññāṇa* in the mother's womb, that the *nāmarūpa* which is already embedded therein prepares itself for the growth of sense organs [*viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpaṃ nāmarūpa -paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*].

It is this vital union of these two inter-dependent factors of *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* at DN. II. 64, [referred to elsewhere as *aññamañña-paccaya* See DA. II. 504 where it says: *yad idaṃ nāma-rūpaṃ sahaviññāṇenā'ti ... aññamañña-paccayatāya pavattati*] which signals the commencement of basic cognitive

awareness or *vedanā* via sub-stages like *phassa* or contact. This basic awareness is made complete only after going through the stage of *saññā* or total understanding [*sañjānāti*]. We have shown above that after this neutral stage of precise knowing called *saññā*, there come stages of aberrant thinking like *vitakketi* and *papañceti* [Madhupiṇḍika Sutta at MN. I. 112].

We have already said that these [i.e. behavioural patterns like *vitakketi* and *papañceti*] lead to *saṃsāra*-prolonging and *dukkha*-amassing. We see an amazing functional similarity between these and the items two, three and four of the *Pañcakkhandha*, namely ii. *vedanā*, iii. *saññā* and iv. *saṅkhāra*. We conclude that the activity of these sub-stages is made possible because of the existence in reality of a human, derived through the combination of *rūpa* existing as such in the *pañcakkhandha* [but deriving from the original *nāmarūpa* in the mother's womb], and his *saṃsāric* continuum called *viññāṇa*. These three are necessarily the outcome of the activity of the psychic component of the human, the first two, i.e. ii. *vedanā* and iii. *saññā* being neutral and impartial and iv. *saṅkhāra* deflected and corrosive. It is because of this corrosive *saṃsāra*-prolonging nature of *saṅkhāra* that the Buddha, on the attainment of enlightenment in Nirvana, said that his mind is no longer under the grip of *saṅkhāra* [*visaṅkhāra-gataṃ cittaṃ taṇhānaṃ khayam ajjhagā*. Dhṃ. v 154].

It is the psycho-physical activity of the human which we have discussed so far which constitutes the core of human life. Human action through word and deed emerge accordingly out of it. Thus-resulting behaviour pattern of the human and its consequences register for him what is going to be his next existence after death. The higher or lower status of one's next birth as *sugati* or *duggati* depends on the level of development of the mind one reaches in this life, relative to one's behaviour in thought, word and deed. In other words it is according to one's *karmic* content. Unless one has reached the state of Nirvana or terminated the process of journeying in *saṃsāra* in this very life, here and now, one must expect to be born again [i.e. be re-born] in some form of existence, after one's death in

this life [*kāyassa bheda parammaraṇā*]. Speaking of this ceaselessly continuous life process, Pali texts use the phrase *cavati ca uppajjati ca* [i.e. passes or moves away from this life here and is born ( again )].

Thus we come to see that in Buddhism death is more real than life. Death is certain [*dhuvaṃ maraṇaṃ*] while life sits on a perilous perch [*addhuvaṃ jīvitaṃ* - both references at DhA. III. 170]. There is no device whatsoever whereby the death of one who is born shall be averted, that one who is born shall not die [*Na hi so upakkamo atthi yena jātā na miyyare* Sn, v. 575]. This being so, let us see how Buddhism explains the phenomenon of death. Where the living human is identified in Buddhism as *nāmarūpa* [i.e. the union of *nāma* and *rūpa*], there death is referred to as the break up of this union and the abandonment of the *rūpa*-component or the physical body [*yadā kāyaṃ jahant'imaṃ* at SN. III. 143] by the other items which constitute *nāma* as well as by other associates of the body itself [like life-expectancy or *āyu* and body heat or *usmā*]. Here is the Saṃyutta Nikaya's graphic description of death:

*Āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ yadā kāyaṃ jahant'imaṃ  
apaviddho tadā seti parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ.*

SN. III. 143

When life expectancy, body-heat and Consciousness  
abandon this human body, discarded it lies,  
bereft of thought activity [cognitive awareness],  
to be moved about only by others.

Translated by the author

This major disunion of *nāma* and *rūpa* [or *nāmarūpa* and *viññāṇa*] at death is referred to here as the *viññāṇa*'s abandonment of the physical body or *kāya* [*kāyaṃ jahant'imaṃ*]. At this juncture, along with it are also gone two other associates already referred to above, namely *āyu* and *usmā*. The Mahāvedalla

Sutta at MN. I. 297] goes into delightful detail on this subject. The subject matter under discussion is the difference between one who has entered the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* and a dead person [*kālakato*].

In the case of a dead person, his bodily functioning of deed, word and thought has ceased and laid to rest [*kāya-vacī-citta-saṅkhārā niruddhā paṭipassaddhā*], his *āyu* or life expectancy [i.e. life-supporter] is terminated [*āyu parikkhīṇo*], his body heat has abated completely and ceased to exist [*usmā vūpasanto*], functioning of his sense organs has broken down [*indriyāni viparibhinnāni*].

On the other hand, he who has entered the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* stands in marked contrast to the dead person [but with some parallels indeed]. In his case too, bodily functioning through deed, word and thought has ceased and laid to rest [*kāya-vacī-citta-saṅkhārā niruddhā paṭipassaddhā*]. But his *āyu* or life expectancy [i.e. life-supporter] is not terminated [*āyu aparikkhīṇo*], his body heat has not totally abated and ceased to exist [*usmā avūpasanto*], his sense organs still claim functional clarity [*indriyāni vipasannāni*]. These are their marked differences and similarities.

The final relevant item in this list of three factors which mark the death of a human is consciousness or *viññāṇa* [the three being *āyu usmā* and *viññāṇa*]. But our sutta [Mahāvedalla at MN, I. 296] in its clarification of the presence or absence of *viññāṇa* in either case, only speaks of the functional clarity of sense organs [*indriyāni vipasannāni*] or its absence [*indriyāni viparibhinnāni*]. This drives us to conclude that the worth of *viññāṇa* as a life-sustainer is in guaranteeing the perfect cognitive functioning of the sense faculties [i.e. the sense organs and their respective areas of activity].

This end is achieved by each one of the five external sense organs having its own line of cognitive communication directly connected to the primary source of consciousness. Here we see the need for the availability [for the creation] of five

items of segmented consciousness or *viññāṇa-kāya*. We see them more as *pro tem* functional units, each serving in a specific area during a specific moment or period of time. They seem to be created in terms of their functional need, as when the eye needs to see or the ear needs to hear, without a real existence of their own in time and space. What then is important in the life of a human is this core consciousness or *viññāṇa* [which in a way is held ultimately responsible for the build up of cognitive awareness.].

It is this vital factor in the life of a human [which we would choose to name as personality-*viññāṇa*] which receives sensory data from the outside world [via its segmented *viññāṇa-kāyas*] and 1. take note of them [*vedeti/vedanā*], and 2. establish their true identity [*sañjānāti / saññā*]. Both these items 1 and 2 are no more than two successive stages of cognitively becoming aware of the world, without any associated value judgements. The Madhupiṇḍika Sutta brings in immediately thereafter deflected forms of corrosive thinking like 3. *vitakketi* and 4. *papañceti* which pervert our judgement of the sensory world and bring about serious consequences on the life of the *saṃsāric* human [MN. I. 112].

We are compelled to observe here that since we believe *viññāṇa* to be the total life-carrier in *saṃsāra* as the *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* or *viññāṇa-sota*, it carries with it the total *karmic*-load of a *saṃsāric* being, irrespective of its being *kusala* or *akusala*. Let us also observe that while the phase of personality-*viññāṇa* of a human lies, more or less, within the territory of an individual's *pañcakkhandha* in one life-time, the *viññāṇa-sota* lies stretched across two existences [*idha-loke patiṭṭhitam para-loke patiṭṭhitam* at DN. III. 105.]. If one can speak, even theoretically, of the simultaneous existence of the *viññāṇa-sota* of an individual in two locations, this effortlessly establishes the inter-existential link between death in one life and the new birth in another of a *saṃsāric* being.

One last word about what happens to a human on the completion of his Buddhist religious culture or when a person is said to have attained the state of Nirvana. What we mean by this last phrase Buddhist religious culture, we shall



explain now. A Buddhist, in consonance with the teaching he professes, seeks to bring about an end to the suffering which we encounter in our very process of living. This goal is attainable in this very existence, while we are still alive, and are in possession of this mortal human frame [*diṭṭh'eva dhamme*]. It is not a state or place we get to after death in a world beyond.

Nirvana is here and now for everyone who qualifies for it. The Buddha attained it at the age of thirty-five and his son Rahula, under the excellent tutelage of his father, while he was only a young monk of tender age. By whatever name one calls this final attainment, one gets it only through the required maturity of one's wisdom or *paññā*. This alone enables us humans of the world to finally tear off the bonds [*saṃyojana*] which fetter beings in saṃsāric existence. The way to Nirvana is essentially a successful process of graduation, quite apart from the grades one is often tempted to look for, even before seriously taking to the path.

The way prescribed in Buddhism for this, according to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, is the *Ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* or the Noble Eightfold Path. Elsewhere, it is referred to as the Three-tiered Culture of Training or *tisso sikkhā*.

Let us begin with the Eightfold Path. In early Buddhist teachings, the way out of *dukkha* is as real as *dukkha* itself. The Buddha is often quoted saying 'I have been preaching to the world then and I do it as well now that there is *dukkha* and that there is a total cessation of it or *nirodha*' [*Pubbe c'āham bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*. MN. I. 140]. Having said about these two items quite early in his missionary life [which come to take their place as numbers one [no. i] and three [no. iii] in the list of four Noble Truths or *ariya-sacca*], the Master, by applying his methodology of causal analysis or *idappaccayatā* gave to the world the other two truths, i.e. no. ii. [origin or *samudaya*] and no. iv [way or *magga*].

We shall now briefly introduce the scope and structure of this way. We have

already discovered it to be the road [*magga*] leading to the goal of Nirvana. It must be understood at this stage that according to all authentic scriptural authority, Nirvana is the reward for the successful completion of the prescribed way. We also must sensibly note that the last item [i.e. the eighth] on this *magga* is *sammā samādhī*. The wisdom, i.e. *ñāṇa* or *paññā* required for the complete eradication of *saṃsāra*-binding *kilesā* comes as No. 9, only as a sequel to the acquisition of *samādhī*, i.e. No. 8 [*sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṃ pahoti* - Janavasabha Sutta at DN.II.217]. This is logically followed by the final statement that this wisdom brings about release [*sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti*. Ibid.]. That is why it is said that one needs to complete or go through ten items to become an *arahant* [*Dasarigasamannāgato arahā hoti*. MN. III. 76]. For the very clear reasons given above, we see that Nirvana, i.e. *vimutti*, stands well beyond the *magga*, taking its position as the tenth and final stage.

Now we shall take up for discussion the other process of religious training in Buddhism for the same purpose of release in Nirvana which goes under the name of *tisso sikkhā* or Three-fold Culture. The very first observation we wish to make in this context is that these two items, namely the Eight-fold Path and the Three-fold Culture, are strictly of two different dimensions, one larger than the other. This is very clearly and emphatically stated by Therī Dhammīnā in the Cūlavedalla Sutta [MN. I. 301].

We quote her words. 'O Visākha, the Noble Eight-fold Path cannot contain within itself the Three Categories of Discipline [*tayo khandhā*]. But the Three Categories of Discipline contain within themselves the Noble Eight-fold Path.' [*Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā. Tīhi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito*. loc. cit.]. From the rest of the context that follows it is quite clear that the three *khandhas* are the three-fold *sikkhā* of *sīla*, *samādhī* and *paññā*.

Keeping these vital bits of information in mind, let us now examine the nature of the religious discipline and religious culture that is envisaged in the Eight-fold

Path. All its eight items have the word *sammā* prefixed to it as in *sammā + diṭṭhi* and *sammā + samādhi*. Words *diṭṭhi* and *samādhi* are common words in Indian religious thinking. But it is our conviction that the word *sammā* prefixed before them implies, without any doubt, that these concepts are now corrected in the Buddhist way. Hence the term *sammā diṭṭhi* would imply corrected Buddhist vision about life and its liberation. Sariputta Thera, a great stalwart among the many early Buddhist thinkers like Mahā Koṭṭhita and Puṇṇa Mantāniputta [See MN. I.146] of the Buddha's day, tells us that this corrected thinking has its genesis in *parato ghosa* [i.e. hearing and learning it from another] and *yoniso ca manasikāro* [i.e. one's own logical analytical thinking about it].

We believe, enough has being said by now about what should come under our title Birth, Life and Death and Being Born Again. Any intelligent reader should find concepts like Rebirth, Karmic continuance and Nirvana become self-evidently explained. This essay is the outcome of challenges the author himself has had to face in encountering apparently self-contradictory statements both in Pali texts and in the explanations offered by a wide range of writers on Buddhism. Self-correction in the context of religion. in the process of living a normal life here and now, endowed with a gift of this unenviable limousine called the *pañcakkhandha* has been the author's main aim. Imagining the comforts and the degree of happiness we could command while in possession of it, blinded by our self-created arrogance and ignorance and the craze for more and more on the worth of our affluence and much talked of personal prestige is well and truly seen to be the bane of mankind.

## Lesson 2

# The Individual and Social Dimension of Salvation in Buddhism

Salvation is defined in the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as "the saving of the soul, the deliverance from sin, and admission to eternal bliss, wrought for man by the atonement of Christ". Even after one has made allowance for the essentially Christian ring in these words, the definition will provide a basis to the Buddhist for a broad-based analysis of the concept of salvation in his own religion. As far as the Buddhists are concerned, their own concept of release or *vimutti* in Pali [or *mokṣa* in Sanskrit] in Nirvana which is their equivalent to salvation shares some of the views expressed in this definition.

Let us begin with the idea of "the saving of the soul". Conceding the possible controversy between the Christians and the Buddhists over the concept of soul, yet there must necessarily be agreement in the acceptance in both religions of distinctness and identity of persons or individuals, with moral and social responsibilities, as they go through life in the world. Whatever religious or philosophical explanation they offer for the circumstances which man faces in life, pleasant or unpleasant, this experience, in spite of many areas of commonness, also carves out an impress of distinct identity for each individual. Therefore, to the Buddhist as much as to the Christian, in consideration of his own value-system, the liberation of this individual is of supreme importance. The antithesis here, when we speak of liberation may be between human and super-human, mortal and immortal. At the level of everyday experience, it is admitted, all is not well in the world. There has to be a transcendence, a rising above or a getting beyond this state of affairs of the mundane world. The Buddhist looks upon life in the world as not being totally satisfactory. Both areas of life of man,

the psycho- and the physical, suffer on account of this deficiency. Some part of it, particularly the physical, like decay, disease and death, is natural and hereditary by virtue of our being caught up in the recurring life process or *samsāra* [i.e. being born again and again].

Psychopathic disturbances, on the other hand, like greed, hatred and jealousy, are products of maladjustment and miscalculation by man, through ignorance and deception [*avijjā* and *moha*]. The totality of this unsatisfactory nature of life is what is termed in Buddhism as *dukkha* and the Buddhist, in his highest and perfect religious pursuit, seeks salvation or release therefrom [*na vo dukkhā pamutti atthi*. Ud.51; *dukkhā atthi pamocanam*. SN.I.62; *dukkhassa nissaraṇam paññāyissati*. SN.II.10]. From *loka* or *lokiya*, the world or the worldly, he seeks transcendence to the *lokuttara* which shares not of the nature of the world. Whether such transcendence results in a perpetual state of factual existence, to the extent of being real in terms of time and space, or it is only a logical assumption in contrast to what is being rejected, is to be examined in detail elsewhere. At any rate, we may here safely conclude that the Buddhist therefore has no problem in his own religious context in subscribing to the general definition of salvation as "the saving of the soul", which to him would mean no more and no less than the liberation or emancipation of the individual being from the "turmoil of the life process" or *samsāra* in which he is caught up.

Coming next to the idea of "the deliverance from sin", it has already been indicated that the Buddhist seeks deliverance from the unsatisfactory nature of the world which, more precisely speaking, pertains to the life of man than to the physical world outside. It is man's submission to this conflict which is termed *dukkha*. In fact, the Buddha himself declares that his entire mission consists of clarifying the real nature of this unsatisfactory position of man in the world which is essentially the connotation of the term *dukkha* and of prescribing for the termination of this *dukkha* referred to as *nirodha* [*Pubbe c'āham bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañc'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham*. MN.I.140]. From

the point of view of the Buddhist, man is in this plight through his own seeking, or rather because of his non-seeking of a release therefrom.

It is this seeking of what is antithetical to the mundane that liberates the *bodhisatta* or Buddha aspirant [i.e Siddhārtha Gautama] in his attainment of Buddhahood, and elevates him from man to super-man. Subject to birth, disease and death, he seeks release from them. In the Buddhist sense, this release or salvation from what is characteristic of human and worldly existence, converges on the transcendental here in this very existence. The word transcendental has certainly to be conceded to the Buddhist, together with the right to determine what it connotes. Since this state does not gravitate towards the earthly and is thus not moored to it, it is very precisely described in Buddhism as a state untraceable here and therefore much less in a world beyond. Much confusion with regard to Buddhism, particularly with regard to Nirvana which is its ultimate goal, has arisen out of this inability to view it in terms of Buddhist values.

It is as a result of the discriminative consciousness of man which is referred to as *viññāṇa* getting loaded with too many mundane or worldly leanings that the life process both here and now as well as in the future existences to come gets charged with vitality or produces the life continuum which the Buddhists refer to as *bhava* or becoming. It is this process which renders the individual being in time-space dimension. Hence in the formula of Causal Genesis or *Paṭiccasamuppāda* [Sk. *pratītyasamutpāda*] we find the statement *bhavapaccayā jāti* which means 'becoming produces birth.' The very traceability of the individual is on account of this density and opacity which his consciousness acquires in the process. Consequently it is possible to point out and say that his mind has these propensities, that it leans on this or that [*idaṃ nissitam viññāṇan'ti*]. It is the very fuel on which life, with all its manifestations, glows and continues its run. On the other hand, the scope of salvation in Buddhism is to bring about a de-conditioning of the mind or an ultimate reduction of the activity of the discriminative consciousness. Hence in Nirvana, the process of this fuel

generation ceases and the very basis of becoming [*bhava*], and not of the being, is totally destroyed. For Nirvana in Buddhism neither equates with nor is dependent on physical death.

In consequence of this, an inquiry with regard to what happens after his death, to a being who has attained Nirvana, in relation to the process of becoming this or that, is an unwarranted question. A predication with regard to his identity even in this very life is an untenable position. His mind being totally de-conditioned and being completely free from leanings of any sort, no identity whatsoever can be established of him, now or for the future. *Samsāra*-wise [i.e. life-process wise] he has ceased to be. This position with regard to the emancipated being, the one who has attained the state of Nirvana is clearly enunciated in the Buddhist texts. It stands well defended as the logical outcome of Buddhist thinking. The Alagaddūpama Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [MN.I.140] expresses this very clearly. Its importance as a vital piece of information for the correct understanding of the scope of salvation in Buddhism, eschatologically, cannot be overrated. But lamentably, the Pali Text Society translation of this passage has completely missed this point and produced in its place something which does not consistently fit into the logic of the Buddhist theory of salvation. For the purpose of clarification, the original text in Pali together with the P.T.S translation [which we consider to be not very satisfactory] and the suggested new rendering are added here.

*Evam vimuttacittam kho bhikkhave bhikkhum sa-Indā devā sa-Brahmakā sa-Pajāpatikā anvesam nādhigacchanti - idam nissitam tathāgatassa viññānan'ti. Tam kissa hetu. Diṭṭhevā'ham bhikkhave dhamme tathāgataṃ ananuvejjo'ti vadāmi.* [MN.I..140. P.T.S.]

P.T.S. Translation [Incorrect].

Monks, when a monk's mind is freed thus, the devas with Indra, Brahma and Pajāpati, do not succeed in their search if they think: `This is the discriminative

consciousness attached to a Tathāgata.' What is the reason for this? I, monks, say here and now that a Tathāgata is untraceable.

Suggested translation:

Monks, devas with Indra, Brahma and Prajāpati, tracking down a monk whose mind is freed, i.e. a monk who is emancipated, would not discover the discriminative consciousness of such a one [Tathāgata] to be leaning on this or that [*idam nissitam*]. What is the reason for this? I, monks, say that a Tathāgata is untraceable even in this very life.

This same curiosity to track down the consciousness of the emancipated being after his death, is recorded in the story of Godhika in the Samyutta Nikaya [SN.I.122]. The Buddha declares that Godhika, having attained the state of Nirvana, passed away with a consciousness that finds no foothold: *appatitthitena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena godhiko kulaputto parinibbuto*.

As against this, the goal in terms of Christian concepts is given as "admission to eternal bliss". Here again, concept-wise and vocabulary-wise, the Buddhists would appear to be somewhat different from the Christians. Considering the fleeting and transitory nature of worldly phenomena which is consequently labeled as unsatisfactory, transcendence from it must logically bring about its antithesis, namely a non-transitory nature. But the bliss of Nirvana in Buddhism consists primarily of this elimination of transitoriness. Thus Nirvana is described as being non-birth [*ajāta*], non-decay [*ajara*] and non-death [*amata*], i.e. free from features which are characteristic of *samsāra* or the round of worldly existence. To be in this mortal frame of man and be assured that there would be no more subjection to these travails in a life beyond is truly the bliss of Nirvana.

Even where they manifest themselves in the life of a liberated disciple during the remaining days of his life, it is as though they matter not to him any more and count for nothing in his life. That is why it is possible for him to say, with calm and composure- "I yearn not for life, I long not for death". This was said by none other



than the great disciple Sariputta [See Theragāthā vv.1002-3]. In this state, one sees the consummation of the religious life in Buddhism. A liberated Buddhist disciple is a *jīvan mukta* [i.e. liberated while living] in the true sense of the word. His release is not eschatological. It is not a posthumous reward. This alone, and not more nor less, is true Buddhist salvation. It is the transcendence of the true Buddhist disciple. The Buddhists have not the need, like their fellow-religionists in Jainism, Sankhya, Yoga and Vedanta, to think of a *videha mukti* [a release on the disengagement from the body] beyond this, to be looked upon as final liberation.

At this stage one is compelled to observe that it would be difficult to find in Buddhism, with regard to the notion of salvation, a parallel to the above mentioned Christian idea of "admission to eternal bliss". In this context one cannot afford to lose sight of the basic divergences in the definition of life, the explanation of its origin and its ultimate goal in the two systems. To insist on a uniformity here is far from desirable and to assume the existence of such a uniformity is far from the truth. One has to point out that even the assumed relationship of the liberated *tathāgata* in Buddhism with the Absolute in the Upanishads is only a forced one. Of the many words used to refer to the state of Nirvana, *amata* or non-death or deathless is the direct outcome of the earlier concept of *ajāta* or non-birth.

Primarily Nirvana is the state which signifies the cessation of the process of being born again. Some of the Pali phrases which signify this are *khīnā jāti* [birth is terminated] and *nāparam itthattāyā'ti pajānāti* [comprehends that there is no more of being such and such] as at MN.I.138. Thus the idea of deathless as an attribute of Nirvana is a derivative and negative concept, coming in the wake of 'no more rebirth'. Reference to Nirvana as 'the realm of the Eternal', while one appears to be making use of Pali sources belonging to the Theravada tradition, has to be judged as a gross distortion [See The God of Buddha by Jamshed Fozdar, pp.23, 24].

Lastly, let us take note of the crowning phrase of the more or less Christian definition of salvation viz. "wrought for man by the atonement of Christ". The approximating likeness of this concept in Buddhism is seen in the Bodhisattva doctrine of the Mahayana schools where the magnanimity of the saviour in the person of the *bodhisattva* works out the moral, social and spiritual uplift and emancipation of man. Acts of sacrifice and surrender of what is personally beneficial in the interests of the multitude marks out the *bodhisattva* as one who is dedicated to work for the salvation of suffering humanity. Texts like the Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra and the Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra [Ch.24 entitled Samantamukhaparivarta] deal with this role of the *bodhisattva* in great detail.

It is on such a religio-philosophical basis as described so far that the Buddhists structure their salvation machinery. The goal of their salvation is Nirvana which is the complete cessation of the worldly life process as it is discernible to man [compare such uses in Pali as `*acchijji vaṭṭam*: terminated the process of revolving in samsara' and `*chinnam vaṭṭam na vattati*: the wheel which has been destroyed shall roll not again' at Ud. p.75. Note the imagery of the wheel rolling on. Also `*ettāvatā vaṭṭam vaṭṭati itthattam paññāpanāya*: So long will the wheel roll on establishing a state of thusness' at DN.II.63f. It is this process of the wheel of life rolling on which is termed *samsāra*, and stands in marked contrast to Nirvana which is the cessation of that process. The travails thereof are known as *dukkha* and transcendence or release from them is what is implied by the term *mokṣa*.

In Buddhism, the discovery of both the malady as well as the remedy for it was made by the Buddha himself at a human level of analysis and inference and through a diligent application to the perfection of wisdom via a process of personal self-culture and self-development. This is why the Buddha ultimately declared that as far as salvation is concerned man is without the external refuge of a Divine Being [*attāṇo loko anabhissaro* MN.II.68]. Another very popular Pali term used for the concept of salvation in Buddhism is *vimutti* [Sk. *vimukti*] which

also etymologically means release. Having looked upon this release from the turmoil of life or the cessation thereof as the real salvation of man, the Buddha in his profound but simple thesis of the Four Noble Truths, prescribed in his Truth of the Way or *magga sacca* a path leading to its attainment. It is the path that leads man from grief to happiness, from death to immortality, from worldliness to transcendence. In the process of winning this salvation according to the tradition of Theravada Buddhism the role of the Buddha begins and ends at the level of indicating what this path is. The Buddha is in fact called the proclaimer of the way, hitherto undeclared: *anakkhātassa maggassa akkhātā* [MN.III.8]. The striving for the successful attainment of it is entirely the work of each individual. Each individual must make an effort by himself. The Buddhas only indicate the way: *Tumhehi kiccam ātappam akkhātāro tathāgatā*' [Dhammapada v. 276].

In marked contrast to the salvation process in most theistic religions which invoke qualities of heart like faith, dedication and devotion [*sraddhā* and *bhakti*], the Buddhists stress on the role of the individual towards this same attainment which requires the development of the human personality in a different direction. First and foremost, it requires initiative and effort, the first steps in putting oneself on gear, as it were. This attempt at making a sustained effort or application of *virīya* [*virīyam ārabhatī*] is in fact, one of the ten perfections [*virīya pāramī*] which, in the tradition of the Theravada, a *bodhisattva* is required to develop towards the attainment of his Buddhahood.

Of this too, the initiative or getting into stride [*arabbha dhātu*] comes to be specially commented upon as a vigorous and vital aspect of personality. This, together with resolve or determination [*adhiṭṭhāna*] which is another of the ten perfections, invokes the qualities of the heart with a different stress. Development of the Buddhist path to salvation on the other hand is predominantly weighted on the side of qualities of the head. Decisive mental alertness [*sati* or Skt. *smṛti*] is an early requirement for the development of a meaningful concentration [*samādhi*] of mind. All these are invariably found to be prerequisites for the

acquisition of the very vital tool for the salvation process, which is none other than the penetrative wisdom or *paññā* [Skt. *prajñā*] which is the crown jewel of Buddhist salvation, yet serving only as a means to an end and not an end in itself.

As far as the Buddhist concept of salvation is concerned, it is to be observed that this transcendence from the world is the result of comprehending the true nature of the world in which we are and consequently of coming to proper relations with it. The forces that bind man to it, in rather inevitably painful ways, are to be personally comprehended in order to be able to reduce their gravitation towards the earthly. This involves both an individual and inward adjustment as well as adjustments with social implications. There is no denying the fact that the former is more basic and primary while the social implications are more derivative. While this is necessarily so, it does not reduce the ethical richness of the religious system. Starting with the religiously primary consideration of self-adjustment with the goal of salvation in mind, we have to focus attention on two major items which relate to this. The degree of involvement of man in the affairs of the world being the basic core of the phenomenon of his unhappiness in life or *dukkha*, the remedial measures towards its elimination or reduction require that man studies, in the first instance, the reason for this involvement. At the same time he has also to investigate and find out for himself why this involvement brings about unhappiness. This latter leads to an exhaustive analysis of the true nature of the world or worldly phenomena.

It would be profitable at this stage to indicate that as far as the early phase of Buddhism known as the Theravada is concerned the search for reality is no more than the desire to comprehend the real and true nature [*yathāhucca*] of the world in which we are and with which we are constantly in communication. It is to be categorically stated that this is not a search for a Reality beyond this life or beyond this world. Nor does the attempt of the Buddhist to grasp the real and true nature of the world lead to the assumption, as with some of the other Indian

philosophies, that the empirical world is no more than *māyā* or a mind-made illusion. The world does exist on its own tempo. In the Buddhist analysis and scrutiny it becomes evident that the world, including man therein, is essentially subject to the law of change [*viparināmadhamma*]. Known also as the law of impermanence or *anicca*, this basic character necessarily generates in the mind of the worldling states of conflict, tension and frustration, on account of his own inability to cope with these changes which, though by no means welcome are characteristic of the world in which he lives. Of the three *signata* or characteristics which mark the life of man in the world, it is this changing, transitory nature, its *anicca* characteristic which in its wake brings along the other two, namely unsatisfactoriness or *dukkha* and 'lack of mastery over' or *anatta* [generally translated as soullessness].

Such a world view or an awareness of the true characteristics of the world must put the Buddhist disciple who is endowed with a degree of self-awareness in a position of guarded activity. The over-enlargement of the ego with an associated assertion of I and mine has then necessarily to be kept at a minimum. Speaking in Buddhist terms, derivative notions of greed and hatred [*lobha* and *dosa*] which start spiraling around the assertion of I and mine, are set in motion by likes and dislikes [*piya* and *appiya*], in terms of man's desire to possess or reject [*abhijjhā* and *vyāpāda*]. A true Buddhist disciple is called upon to start his religious life with a regulation of this process. The impact of this psycho-ethical correction in ultimate terms of salvation, is comparable to the two sides of a coin.

The result of this ethical correction is concurrently active in the two areas, individual and social. A disciple who is in quest of his salvation is thus seen to be gradually working towards the reduction and eradication of these pernicious traits of mind, namely greed and hatred. In their place, there develops in the mind of the disciple love and charity, a desire to give and share instead of a greed to selfishly possess as well as a desire to love, tolerate and accommodate rather than hate, reject and repel. Salvation-wise, these virtues are individually

elevating and ennobling, and socially exhilarating and leading to productive growth. They form the very bases from which a man's right to his life and property comes to be vindicated.

The survey which I have just concluded was undertaken with a view to indicate the intellectual basis on which the Buddhist formula of salvation operates. However, it is to be appreciated that the socio-intellectual changes which come upon the individual at this stage are, from the point of view of the Buddhist, absolved from the charge of 'being purely theoretical'. With the Buddhists, all activities have their origin at the level of the mind [*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā* - Dhp. v.1]. Correctness or otherwise, propriety or impropriety, of all action committed by man is determined in terms of the intellectual activity, or in other words, decision making undertaken by the doer [*manasā ce pasannena ... manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā* - Dhp. vv.1 & 2]. Even before an act is rendered in physical terms through word or deed, it already registers at the mind level its impact on the doer. Human activity lends itself to evaluation with greater ease at the level of physical expression. Their social desirability or viciousness is felt unmistakably at this level. In Buddhism, this gauging of human activity is attempted from both ends.

In the Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [MN.I. 415f.], the Buddha in his admonitions to Rahula, uses the yardstick of results of action to determine their approvability.' That which is detrimental to one's own well-being, or to the well-being of the other or of both, should unhesitatingly be given up as being bad', says the Buddha [See MLS.II.89f].

In counselling the Kalamas. on the other hand. the Buddha advises them to determine the nature of their motivation to activity [as having its origin in greed, hatred or delusion] and to regulate their activity to be of non-pernicious motivation, free from greed, hatred and delusion.

It would now be easy to indicate and clarify that the Buddhist way to salvation

is founded on this theoretical basis and on this intellectual analysis. The Buddha who was concerned with the unsatisfactoriness [or *dukkha*] of the world in which man was caught up and for which he was earnestly searching a way out, until he himself attained the stage of enlightenment or Buddhahood, thus transcending this worldliness, and prescribed a way [*magga* or *patipadā*] for the salvation of man.

This is the fourth of the Four Noble Truths propounded by the Buddha. Designated as the Noble Eightfold Path [*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*] it covers a very vast expanse of human development, both individual and social. It starts with a basic intellectual grasp of the human situation, upholding that such a corrected vision about life alone could regulate it, harnessing its resources for its own redemption. This is termed *sammā dīṭṭhi* or corrected vision, man's vision about life and the world. Working with an efficient intellectual quantum, provided both from within and without [*parato ca ghoso yoniso ca manasikāro* at MN.I.294] man is able judge for himself the ill-effects of his own actions. First and foremost, he learns to cultivate the Buddhist attitude to life, the non-permissibility of a staggering ego [*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*], a position which is most desirable salvation-wise, to the individual. Psychologically, this elimination of the basis of individuation or personal assertion, brings in a whole series of changes in social values. This brings in a direct relationship of man to man in terms of friendship, totally non-discriminative. This is *maitrī* or loving kindness. This universal love which is the result of the obliteration of the ego is not restricted even by considerations of human and animal.

Life in the universe, both great and small, comes within its range. So does friend and foe, those near and far, those seen and unseen [*Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā dīhgā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimārassakānukathulā dīṭṭhā vā ye va addiṭṭhā ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*. Sn. vv.164-7]. Consequent to this corrected [*sammā*] vision about life, everything else that

follows in the noble eightfold way necessarily acquire the tone of correctness. Thoughts which spring from such a basis are invariably wholesome thoughts [*sammā saṅkappa*: item No. 2]. As these manifest themselves in action they give rise to inoffensive, fruitful speech [*sammā vācā*: item No. 3] and justifiable forms of activity [*sammā kammanta*: item No. 4]. Up to this stage, while the individual is being cultured in terms of his thought, word and deed, society is at the same time benefiting from the non-corrosiveness of individual action. This being the graduation of the individual on the path of salvation as we have already indicated above, we witness a twofold benefit in two distinct spheres.

While gradual spiritual ascendance on the path of salvation is assured to the individual on the one hand, we also find him fitting himself to life in the world with great ease and with even greater harmony. Conflict and tension as far as each individual is concerned, thereby necessarily step out of the way. On the other hand, society is not harassed by erring individuals. The composition of society would witness a greater percentage of such persons of corrected vision and regulated action. Item No. 5 of this code for salvation, namely *sammā ājiva* or corrected livelihood grooms the life style of an individual in society in such a way as to make society completely safe for living. The term *ājiva* implies the means whereby one makes a living. At the minimum, man must find the food and clothing for himself and his dependents. But he must earn his bread, himself. But this wherewithal for living which in Buddhist contexts is referred to as *bhoga* has to be acquired by just and fair means: *dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi bhogehi* [AN.II.67]. One has to toil for it [*bāhā-balaparicitehi*. *ibid.*] and earn it with the sweat of one's brow *sedāvakkhittehi*. *ibid.*]. Thus in terms of Buddhist values, while it is accepted that life is dear to every one [*sabbesaṃ jīvitam piyaṃ*: Dh. v.130], it has to be nurtured and kept going by fair and honourable means. These social safeguards, built into the Buddhist scheme of salvation, enhances its relevance in a highly competitive commercialized society, where money values and material turnover, and those alone, seem to topple down other considerations.



Viewing the Buddhist concept of salvation from yet another angle, we find the process leading to it built upon three ascending terraces. This is referred to as the training via the threefold-culture or *tisso sikkhā*. Here too, in the final ascent is perfection of wisdom or attainment of undistorted vision about oneself. In the Eightfold way discussed earlier, the perfection of right concentration [*sammā samādhi* or item No. 8] brings about perfected wisdom or *sammā ñāna*. This is what precedes salvation or release [*vimutti*]. The threefold culture of *sikkhā* too, has wisdom [*paññā*] as its final state, preceding release [*sammā ñānassa sammā vimutti pahoti*. DN.II.217]. While the second stage of this training geared towards salvation, isolates the individual, more or less, to a transcendent plane, from his involvement with the mundane, its basis or *sīla* deals essentially with the correction of man in relation to the social environment. This, in other words, is no doubt the moral uplift of man.

As far as this code of *sīla* is concerned, there is a difference in scope and content between that of monk and layman. Geared towards the attainment of the goal of salvation, worked out through a gradual process of up-lifting, a Buddhist disciple rids himself of obnoxious patterns of behaviour through word and deed and cultivates positive traits of character which contribute to the healthy growth of social harmony and concord. The Buddhist charter for this is the 'code of five precepts' or *pañcasīla*. Abstaining from destruction of life both human and animal, he develops boundless love for all life, working for their weal and welfare. This indeed is the first moral precept of the Buddhist layman. Abstaining from stealing, he cultivates the manifold aspects of honesty, preventing the alienation of any one from his legitimate possessions. A special precept safeguards the privacy of his domestic life, the safety and security of the females of his household as well as those in society at large. Honesty of word and deed is guaranteed and safeguarded by the fourth precept relating to speech. This protects and upholds societal interconnectedness founded on honesty and trustworthiness. Finally, there is included the fifth precept of abstinence from drugs and alcoholic drinks for the sake of greater sanity and sound judgement

among men.

Thus, it may be said that from whatever angle one looks upon the Buddhist path to salvation, it becomes abundantly clear that it is geared towards, and invariably results in, character formation or reformation of character which the Buddhists refer to as a 'developed or cultured self' [*bhāvitatta*]. The real standing of such a person, i.e. a salvation seeker in Buddhism, is indeed both within the society and outside it, with its highly praiseworthy individual and social dimensions.

May all beings be well and happy.

## Section Two - Religion

### Lesson 3

#### The Four Noble Truths

#### or Cattāri Ariya Saccāni

The very first message in which our Master [i.e. the Buddha] made known to the world his teachings for the liberation of man from suffering in life [i.e. in *Sam̐sāra* in a long-range vision] has come to be called The Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma. In Pali it is called the Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta [SN. V. 420 f. and Vin. I. 10 f.]. At the time it was delivered, it was not done with as much ease or as much publicity as issuing an election manifesto in the world today. It was after much scrutiny, and a wide-spread search, that the Buddha was able to gather together his first audience, the Five Mendicants [*pañca-vaggiyā bhikkhū*] with whom he had worked together in his search for that supreme Blissful State [referred to in Buddhist texts as *anuttaraṃ santi-vara-padaṃ pariyesamāno*. MN. I. 163].

After much deliberation, the Buddha came to the conclusion that he reached the state of enlightenment after a long penetrative search and a great deal of painful perseverance which taught him many a useful lesson. His own words about this are *kicchena me adhigataṃ*: painfully did I acquire this [MN. I.168].

It is equally true that he achieved this as a result of his keen desire to find a way out [or *nissaraṇa*] of this stressful plight [*kicchaṃ*] in which he found mankind plunged in. This life process of birth, decay and death and being born again, our Buddha aspirant unhesitatingly calls *dukkha*. In his own words, this was a sensing he had of the world, prior to his being the Buddha, while he was only an aspirant for enlightenment [*Pubbe'va me bhikkhave sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass' eva sato etadahosi. Kicchaṃ vata ayaṃ loko*

*āpanno jāyati ca jīyati ca mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca. ... Kudāssu nāma imassa dukkhassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyissati jarāmarāṇassā'ti. SN. II. 10].*

What he sees here is no more than the down-to-earth reality of life. However, both the philosophical thinking at the time in India and their scientific awareness of the world in which they lived, including the evolving and devolving processes of the universe [like the *vivaṭṭa-kappas* and *saṃvaṭṭa-kappas* which in a way are comparable to the Big Bang and the Big Crunch ideas of the scientists of today] made the Indians, including our Buddha aspirant, to consider and accept the reality of a life beyond death [like *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyuṃ āpnoti* of the Upanishads]. It is this new dimension of life beyond the present which validated the Indian concept of *Saṃsāra*. Buddhism accepts it *in toto*. It must immediately be pointed out that the totality of Buddhist religion and philosophy centers on this.

It is our Buddha aspirant's this vision of *Saṃsāra* and his sincere desire to find for the world a way out of continuance within it which organically provided for the genesis of the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* or Causal Genesis. Its subject matter deals with the production of *Saṃsāric* continuity and its consequent ills or *dukkha*. This is Truth No. 1 [of the doctrine of Four Noble Truths]. And in its reverse presentation [the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* or Causal Genesis], it indicates the way of liberation from the ills of *Saṃsāra*. By no means does it deal with anything else. *Saṃsāra*, both with regard to its continuance and its termination, is its pre-occupation. On the production side, it speaks of *paccayā* as in *avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra* [on account of ignorance are *Saṃsāra*-builders produced] and on the termination side, it speaks of *nirodhā* as in *bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho* [in the elimination of existential productivity birth is ended].

Now about Truth No. 2 or *Samudaya sacca* which comes about as a result of the search for the origin of Truth No. 1. Starting with the logical question `In the presence of what does decay and death [i.e. the primary sources of *dukkhā*] come to be: *kimhi nu kho sati jarāmarāṇaṃ hoti kimpaccayā jarāmarāṇan'ti*' the Bodhisatta worked out the entire Chain of Causal Genesis, up to its first

beginning in *Iti hi idaṃ avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā ...* [SN.II. 10]. This he calls the genesis of *dukkha*: *Evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti* [loc. cit.]. This is the pattern of the causal origin of *dukkha*.

Basically, it is the fact of being born or being born again and again [i.e. *punabbhava*] that generates its derivatives [*jātiyā sati idaṃ hoti*]. Therefore in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the *samudaya sacca* or the cause of the origin of *dukkha* is identified as re-birth generating *taṇhā* or craving which leads to rebirth [*yā'yaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā*]. It has three facets or spreads over three areas of territory as

- i. the craving for sensory gratification or *kāma taṇhā*
- ii. craving for continuance in the *Samāsāric* process of *bhava* [*bhava taṇhā*] and
- iii. the craving for the precipitous or suicidal termination of the life process [*vibhava taṇhā*].

Now over to Truth No. 3 in our series. This is the antithesis of *dukkha* which is referred to as *nirodha* [i.e. termination of *dukkha* or *dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*]. That is Nirvana as polarised against *Samāsāra*. We have already referred to this at the very outset. [The Buddha holds out *dukkha* and *nirodha* as the two major items on which he preaches to the world all the time. MN. I. 140]. The fourth truth of *magga* or the Way emerges as the path leading to that goal. This is finally the Truth No. 4 in the series.

It is the Noble Eightfold Path [*Ayam eva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*] which consists of eight graduated stages, commencing with *sammā diṭṭhi* or corrected vision as stage No. 1 and ending with *sammā samādhi* or perfect concentratedness of mind as stage No. 8. That this *samādhi* is the result of a progressive sequential development process becomes abundantly clear from another authoritative statement in our texts about what are called `basic requirements for the development of *samādhi* or *satta samādhi parikkhārā*

[Janavasabha Sutta at DN. II. 216]. This is the way, this is the road and the road alone [*sekho paṭipado* at MN. III. 76], leading up to Nirvana or state of an *arahant*. The resultant goal of liberation or *vimutti* lies beyond this road. The way leads to the build-up or maturing of the wisdom which is indispensably needed for release from *Samāsāric dukkha* [*ñāna* or *paññā* as stage No. 9]. Release or *vimutti* is reached at stage No. 10.

This in brief is a summing up of the basic truths of Buddhism. It was meant to be a message to the world, i.e. a message to mankind. But the Buddha equally well realised that, in the normal run of events, the world at large was steeped in the basic instincts of attraction and repulsion [*rāga-dosa-pareta*], resulting from man's possessive motive or desire of selfhood [*ālaya* or clinging to]. Therefore he correctly summed up the attitude of worldlings to life as one of being given to clinging, clinging to power, prestige and position and whatever else one could gather into this pauper's bag in his wandering through life: *Ālayarāmā kho panāyaṃ pajā ālayaratā ālayasammuditā*. [MN. I. 167]. He clearly saw the contradiction between the thrust of his message which recommended renunciation and relinquishment [*sabbūpadhi-paṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*] and the general inclination of the world to acquire and be attached to as he pronounced about beings in the world or *pajā* in his forthright statement above as *ālayarāmā* and *ālayaratā*. His teaching which leads to Nibbāna required, for this reason, paddling upstream [*paṭisota-gāmiṃ* loc. cit.].

In Buddhism, these findings are called truths or *sacca* in the sense that they describe the *reality* and the *nature* of human life in the world as well as that they prescribe solutions to the *problems* which human life generates. The very nature of human life, with its associated day to day changes of wear and tear, with growth, old age, disease etc. and the emotional imbalances which humans are called upon to face, day in and out, are said to be not very acceptable to the human mind. The fact that what one believes is one's own [i. e. deriving from one's own self-nurtured sense of ego] is continually subject to change [i.e.

subject to the law of change or *aniccā*] presents a continuous conflict which results in grief. It is unpleasant and disagreeable and therefore unacceptable. In Pali, the word *dukkha* [Sinhala *duka*] is used to refer to this unacceptability. Nevertheless, this is admitted to be the very basic nature of the humans, that they resist this grieving situation [choosing all the time its opposite: *sukha-kāmā* i.e. humans love comfort and *dukkha-paṭikkūlā* i.e. resist discomfort]. This situation is no more and no less than their own creation.

This truth about the unsatisfactory nature in the life process of humans, namely *dukkha sacca*, is the very first of the Four Noble Truths. Remember, and the Buddha tells you this very clearly, that this is the very first truth of life he himself sensed while he was still unenlightened and not yet become the Buddha: *pubbe'va sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass'eva sato etadahosi*. SN. II. 10]. With a keenness of purpose and an equally determined steady application, it is possible for every human to arrive at it. The Buddha wanted us, as true pursuants of Nibbana, to strive for the comprehension of this [*pariññeyyan'ti*].

Founded on a very scientific basis of causal genesis [*idappaccayatā paṭicca-samuppado*] for his study of the problem of man, the Buddha began by asking himself as to what brings about this unsatisfactoriness or *dukkha* [*kismiṃ sati idaṃ hoti ... loc. cit.*] in the life of man. There clearly appeared to him the unmistakable answer that it is the wish of the humans to possess whatever they choose as their own [which in Pali is rendered as *taṇhā* and is translated into English as craving, thirsting for etc.]. And this, man also wants according to his own wishful thinking, to be in an unchanging condition, [contrary to the known laws of the universe.]. Thus one of the recurrent statements of the Buddha to the world is that he preaches two things, namely the presence of *dukkha* and its termination or *nirodha* [*pubbe cā'haṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ MN. I. 140*].

Thus it should now become clear even to a child mind, that this element of

grief in what is called *dukkha* or unsatisfactory nature in life does not exist as such in the external world, by itself. It is generated in the heart [or mind] of man, or wherever the psychic process operates, due to man's own lack of reconciliation to the laws of nature. As an antidote to craving and as a force with which to combat it, Buddhism puts forward the teaching of the three-fold characteristics in the nature of things in the world. It is referred to as three signata or *tilakkhaṇa* [Sinhala *tilakuṇa*].

*Tilakkhaṇa* begins with *anicca* as No. 1. *Anicca* is that things of the phenomenal world are all subject to the law of change or impermanence. If one does not comprehend this truth, one will always run into grief when the inevitable does happen, i.e. destruction of persons or things takes place, at times when one least expects or suspects them to happen. This item of running into grief is No. 2 and is called *dukkha* or being dissatisfied. This is no more than 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' *Dukkha* results in the wake of a reaction process. The philosophic truth No.3 which is to be discovered and derived out of these two, and that for the sake of an untrembling philosophic stability in life, is termed *anatta*, i.e. the self discovery of the absence of an unchanging self-identity or a soul in the phenomenon of living. This has to be both by way of person and property. That there is nothing enduring which we can hold on to in this life nor in the life beyond death.

Although we have four items in the formal list of Noble Truths, we discover from what we have said above that they historically emerge, and that very naturally, only as two in number. The pre-enlightenment Buddha aspirant or *bodhisatta*, with his keener and more precise sensitivity, becomes aware of the presence of self-generated *dukkha* [born of mal-constructed attitudes] in the world. We may easily discover it within the fathom-sized body of man [... *imasmiṃ byāmamatte kalebare saññimhi samanake lokañ ca paññāpemi...* AN. II. 50]. This is Truth No. 1. It is multi-faceted. He discerns within it birth, ageing and decay, disease and death. He sees the misery of it and calls it lamentable -



*kicchaṃ vatā'yaṃ loko āpanno jāyati ca jīyati ca mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca.*[SN. II. 10].

Then the Buddha aspirant is genuinely motivated to look for a way of getting out of the unsatisfactory nature of the life process in which humans [*loka*] are caught up, i.e. a *nissarana*. In his own words, he asks as to when an end of it will be discovered [*Kudā'ssu nāma imassa dukkhassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyissati jarā-maraṇassā'ti*. loc. cit.]. It is also referred to as cessation of *dukkha* as it is sometimes called [*dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*]. These are the two items which the Buddha is supposed to carry all the time in his hand, as it were, and deliver to the world as the basics of his teaching - *pubbe c'āhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ ca paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*. In the more systematised listing of the Truths, this latter stands as No. 3.

The cause of *dukkha*, i.e. *samudaya*, in the systematised listing, stands as No. 2 The way or *magga* leading to *nirodha* or release in Nibbana finally takes its stand as Truth No. 4. The Buddha aspirant's causal analytical method of approach to the problem of *dukkha* [i.e. his question as to what being present does *dukkha* appear - *kismiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*] revealed the stark reality that being born into a state of existence or *jāti* brings all these in its wake [*jātiyā sati idaṃ hoti*]. Whether it is *dukkha* associated with the presence of the physical body or mental states of agony like separation from near and dear ones [*piyehi vippayogo dukkho* etc.], they all emerge from being in a state of existence [*bhava paccayā jāti*].

The final solution to the problem of *dukkha*, well and truly, lies in the termination of the process of 'being born' { *jāti nirodhā jarāmarāṇa - nirodho*}. And this is possible only in the final termination of the persisting state of existence or *bhava* [*bhava-nirodhā jāti- nirodho*]. That is why the ecstatic utterance of the Buddha and of all others who, following him, terminate their *samsāric* suffering, reads as 'This is my last birth. I have no more *samsāric* continuance or existence': *Ayaṃ antimā jāti. Natthi'dāni punabbhavo* at MN. I.

167 [This is my last birth. There is no possibility of my being born again.].

Finally, the Buddha offers in the fourth truth or *magga sacca*, the final solution to the problem of *dukkha* in life, namely the way out of it. It is the Noble Eight-fold Path or *Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo*. There is no other alternative way. Of all the cultures and modes of training that take a worldling from *samsāra* to Nirvana [or death to deathlessness], the Buddhist Path alone counts on self-reliance and self-endeavour to bring about the necessary spiritual culture and development for this purpose. Grace from no higher power outside oneself operates in the Buddhist scheme of salvation.

How then does the Noble Eightfold Path operate in Buddhism? It undoubtedly is a ladder of spiritual ascent. It implies an upward successive and progressive movement. It moves from the mundane to the transcendental [*lokiya* to *lokuttara*]. It begins with *sammā diṭṭhi* or corrected vision as step No. 1, providing the essential link between the average non-Buddhist worldling and the converted new Buddhist [not the merely born-Buddhist because his parents happen to be labelled as such]. The possession of *sammā diṭṭhi* or corrected vision provides the new convert with the road map, as it were, indicating the road along which he should proceed to get to the desired goal of Nibbāna. None other than the great stalwart in the *Sāsana*, Thera Sariputta, in the Mahāvedalla Sutta, tells us how to acquire that. There are two conditions or *paccaya* for the arising of *sammā diṭṭhi* [*Dve kho āvuso paccayā sammā diṭṭhiyā uppādāya. parato ca ghoso yoniso ca manasikāro*. MN. I. 294]. This correct vision of the *dhmma* must be authoritatively had from a reliable source [*parato ghoso* - loc. cit.].

There is no provision in early Buddhist thinking for such perfected knowledge as is implied by the word *paññā* to descend into a person from outside. But within a person, such knowledge shall also not lie static, stored up, as it were. The basics of the religion acquired through an external source has to be subjected to further study, to personal examination and investigation [*yoniso ca manasikāro*]. One has to dwell upon that vision and personalise it in one's own life. The

product of this initial and basic exercise is by no means *paññā* which is the transcendental wisdom at the highest summit level. One gains it only after the attainment of *sammā samādhi* which alone opens the way to the required wisdom of *paññā*.

We see now very clearly the emergence from this idea of corrected vision or *sammā diṭṭhi*, of the stage No.2 of the Path, namely of correctly structured Buddhist patterns of thinking or *sammā saṅkappa*. This is said to be successively derived from the preceding stage No.1 of *sammā diṭṭhi* [*sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṅkappo pahoti*. DN. II. 217]. Under the heading of *Satta samādhi-parikkhārā* or Seven Supporting Factors of Samādhi, the Janavasabha of the Dīgha Nikāya [at DN. II. 217] lists the first seven items of the Noble Eightfold Path as gradually leading up to Samādhi, each successive stage following from the preceding one, as is unmistakably clear from the verb *pahoti* which means is generated from or gives rise to in the context. [It is tragic that T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids have seriously blundered in their translation of this as 'Right intention suffices to maintain right views, right speech suffices to maintain intention, right action suffices to maintain right speech, ... right freedom suffices to maintain right knowledge.' See Dialogues of the Buddha II. 250. 1910/1966]. In the light of all these points of doctrine presented so far, it seems untenable to speak of the Eightfold Path as being comparable to 'the intertwining strands of a single cable' which present themselves simultaneously, all at the same time.

Admittedly, *sammā diṭṭhi* leads the way all the time in Buddhist culture [*sammā diṭṭhi-pubbarigamo*], having illumined the Path to the Buddhist. Thereafter, during three stages of living the Path in terms of *vācā* [speech], *kammanto* [activity] and *ājīvo* [livelihood], the guiding factor of *sammā diṭṭhi* as well as accompanying elements of mindfulness [as *sammā sati*] and endeavour [as *sammā vāyāma*] are said to be necessary for their successful growth [See Mahācattārīsaka Sutta at MN. III. 74f.]. But every student of Buddhism has to know that *sammā vāyāma* and *sammā sati*, as independent members of the

Path, have to grow in their own stature, higher up on the Path.

These three items of *vācā*, *kammanto* and *ājīvo* admittedly constitute the living process of the human in the world, in the midst of his society. Provided with the corrected Buddhist vision of *sammā diṭṭhi*, the Buddhist also certainly needs mindfulness which is all the time reckoned with under the vital concept of being mindful under *sato sampajāno*. Also regularly recurrent concepts like *āraddhaviriya* and *ātāpī* assume constant and unfailing application of *vāyāma* [as against *kusītaṃ hīnavīriyaṃ*] in the life of a diligent Buddhist who is salvation oriented, i.e. on the track of the Eightfold Path. Therefore we would consider the reference in this context to *vāyāma* and *sati* more as being as associated virtues of vigorous Buddhist living than as major factors of the Eightfold Path which really have to belong to a higher level of transcendental achievement.

Once a Buddhist disciple has traversed this Path of eight successive stages, he invariably realises that two more stages lie ahead of him as rewards for the training he has been through. In all processes of Buddhist culture like the three-fold *sikkhā*, *samādhi* lies in between *sīla* and *paññā*. So on the Path too, once *samādhi* has been achieved as No.8, wisdom referred to as *ñāṇa* or *paññā*, as No. 9, is readily available as the reward for the training undergone so far. Even on the way of *Jhānas* in Buddhism, we are told that when the mind is in a state of *samādhi* at the fourth *jhāna* [*evaṃ samāhite citte ...*] one is in a position to strive for the achievement of wisdom [*samāhite... pubbenivāsanussati-ñāṇāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti*. Samaññaphala Sutta at DN. I. 81].

It is for this reason that it is said that final liberation in the attainment of *arahanthood* is the product of a ten-fold achievement [*dasariḡasamannāgato arahā hoti*. Mahācattārīsaka Sutta at MN. III, 76]. It is well beyond the Path, proceeding past *samādhi* as No. 8, to the next stage No. 9 in *ñāṇa* [or *paññā*] and finally to No. 10 in *vimutti* or release. Thus it becomes abundantly clear that the *Magga sacca* of Truth No. 4 prepares the pursuant, through its Eightfold Path, only up to the stage of *Sammā samādhi*. Its functional efficiency is

specifically limited. The three-fold spiritual culture of *tisso sikkhā* of *sīla samādhī paññā*, on the other hand, takes the pursuant to his final release in *vimutti*, via the final leap through *paññā* [or *ñāṇa*]. It is described as *sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti* [DN. II. 217] or *paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parkkhīṇā honti* [MN. I. 160].

The very assuring statement about this relative functional efficiency of the Eightfold Path in relation to the Threefold Culture of *tisso sikkhā* comes to us from the Cūlavedalla Sutta in the words of the great lady Therī Dhammadinnā. This is what she says: *Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahītā. Tīhi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahīto.* [MN.I. 301]

## Lesson 4

### Liberation In Nirvāna

#### How do we embark on this Journey?

Unarmed and with a childish awareness of the presence of *dukkha* or dissatisfaction in one's life, one could, man or woman, possibly be driven to a position of utter despair or much further, to total pessimism and surrender. To the uneducated or untutored average worldling, in such an unmanageably devastated state of mind or *moha*, death might appear to be the only way out of it. Hence the alarming rate of increase of suicides in the world, and much more disturbing to us, in Sri Lanka.

But the wisdom of Buddhism lies in its vision of a foreseeable termination of *dukkha* [i.e. *nirodha*] or a way out of it [i.e. *nissaraṇa*], in the hands of the human individual himself. It is on this unassailable foundation that Buddhism as a source of comfort or as a way of salvation is built. Both *dukkha* and *nirodha* being agreed upon, the Buddha courageously pointed it out that this whole scheme of liberation of man in Buddhism depended entirely on himself. This is what comes to be enunciated in the self-operative fourth truth or *magga sacca*. It also goes by the name the Noble Eightfold Path.

Before we proceed any further to talk about this Buddhist scheme of salvation along the Noble Eightfold Path, let us turn our attention to the overall religious culture in Buddhism which is referred to under the name of *sikkhā*. The word itself, derived from the verb *sikkhati*, means culture, training, or being disciplined. This *sikkhā* is spoken of as being threefold, that is *sikkhattaya* or *tisso sikkhā*. It is three-tiered and is to be viewed as ascending upwards.

The preparatory ground level basis of this culture is grooming in moral soundness. This basic culture is referred to as *sīla* [i.e. *adhi-sīla-sikkhā*]. It is the perfecting of harmonious man-to-man relationships as would be evident to any one, Buddhist or non-Buddhist who knows about *pañcā-sīla* or *pānsil*. Basically

among these are respect for life, respect for the rightful ownership of legitimately acquired property, respect for gender relationships etc. all of which the Buddha looked upon as necessary for the healthy growth of humans, fostering robust , well before the emergence of the human rights consciousness of the United Nations in the world today.

Any breach of these brings disaster upon the doer himself, because in doing so one puts oneself primarily in hostility with the community in whose midst one lives. They bring both dread upon the doer [i.e. *bhaya*] and hostility against society [i.e. *vera*] which are said to be corrosive both here in this life and in the life after. Society here and now, in whose midst we live, would invariably call a person of such behaviour a villain. As the Buddhist books say *appahāya pañca-verāni dussīlo iti vuccati* [AN. III. 205]. His misguided foolish conduct would, without much doubt, lead him to degeneracy in his life after death: *Kāyassa bhedā duppañño nirayaṃ so upapajjati* [loc. cit.].

The second item in this triple culture of *sikkhā* is *adhicitta-sikkhā* or culture of the mind. In the Buddha's own words 'One stands firm on moral stability in the development of one's religious or spiritual culture' [*sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño cittaṃ paññañ ca bhāvayaṃ*. SN. I. 165] runs the oft-quoted refrain. It is after being established on this [i.e. *adhicitta-sikkhā*], that a Buddhist proceeds to the next higher level of mind-culture or *adhicitta-sikkhā*. Sitting down to mind-culture in Buddhism requires some degree of preparatory moral soundness. All schools of Buddhism, everywhere, agree on this. The meditation mat or the seat on which one takes his solemn perch alone cannot bring about this required purge.

Whether one likes it or not, this implies the need for a Buddhist to circumscribe the territory in which one freely roams and feeds on in one's daily life. It requires a determined reduction of the involvement in and enjoyment of the pleasures which the world is ever ready to offer to every one, man and woman, unmindful of the consequences they entail. Some modern psychologists of the Western world now sponsor ideas such as delay-gratification and ageing and

sageing which the Buddhists in this part of the world would do well to reckon with. This accords very well with the *nekkhamma sarīkappa*, i.e. item No. 2 of the Eightfold Path which we shall take up for discussion in due course.

Now we shall take up for serious study the *magga sacca* which is the last of this series of four truths. This is the way to the final bliss in Buddhism, namely *nirodha* or *Nibbāna* wherein the *Samsāric* journeying is ended, together with all its accompanying ills, collectively referred to as *dukkha*. In *Nibbāna*, there being no more birth, there is no more *dukkha* of decay, disease and death. Therefore *Nibbāna* is rightly referred to as *dukkhassa + anta* [i.e. end of all ills]. Of it, we can therefore say *nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ* [Dhp. v. 204], that there being no more genesis of *dukkha*, Nibbāna provides the highest bliss.

This *magga sacca* is the Noble Eightfold Path or *Ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. As far as we understand and are competent enough to explain, it consists of eight successive stages, all of which from the first to the eighth [i.e. stages 1 to 7] are said to lead from one to the other, to a more developed subsequent stage. They are therefore referred to as the seven pre-requisites or *satta-samādhī-parikkhārā* [DN. II. 217]. Mark diligently and sensibly the statement in the reliably authentic texts which reads *sammā diṭṭhiṃ sammā sarīkappaṃ pahoti* 埤 etc. [loc. cit.]. This means 'To him who has reached the stage or state of *sammā diṭṭhi* there arises the state of *sammā sarīkappa*.' With these really acceptable authentic texts before our very eyes, how can we ever present the *aṭṭhaṅgika magga* as a cable of eight strands where all different stages are concurrently present?

Accepting this interpretation of successive stages for the *magga*, let us now begin with the very first one of *sammā diṭṭhi*. What one necessarily needs to get at the very outset of being initiated into Buddhism is this *sammā diṭṭhi* or a corrected vision about the new religion. This initiation through *sammā diṭṭhi* is referred to in three ways. No. 1, in the words of Venerable Sariputta in the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* [MN. I. 46], as *ujugatā assa diṭṭhi*. This means his vision is corrected or straightened out. No. 2 is *dhamme aveccappasādena samannāgato*, which means



one is endowed with deep-seated delight in the dhamma. No. 3 is *āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*, meaning one has gained entry or admission into the true doctrine.

See this is the very down-to-earth empiricist approach to the concept of *sammā diṭṭhi*. To disclose here the real identity of *sammā diṭṭhi*, let us refer to the Mahāvedalla Sutta [MN. I. 294] which states in no uncertain terms, in the words of the same Venerable Sariputta once again, in conversation with Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, that the two factors which generate *sammā diṭṭhi* are 1. information received through another [*parato ghoso*] and 2. precise analysis and examination of the same by oneself [*yoniso ca manasikāro*]. To us, it goes without saying, that there could hardly be any disagreement.

At this stage, it is well worth questioning the sanity of the extra-modernist presentation of the threefold religious culture of Buddhism which we have already discussed earlier as being *sīla samādhī paññā*, now being re-set and re-presented, without any approval or endorsement as *paññā sīla samādhī*. This reveals an apparent gross misunderstanding of the true connotation of *paññā* in Buddhism, which is also the final stage [i.e. *adhīpaññā sikkhā*] in the threefold culture or *sikkhā*. Somebody is thoroughly misled, no matter by whom.

We do unhesitatingly subscribe to the view that the wisdom needed for liberation out of *saṃsāra* which our authentic texts refer to as *paññā* and at times as *ñāṇa* is the product of a process of sustained development. This wisdom as *paññā* or *ñāṇa*, is said to be attainable only on the successful completion of the immediately preceding state of *sammā samādhī*, which is the final successive stage [i.e. the 8<sup>th</sup>] on the Eightfold Path [*sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṃ pahoti* - DN. II. 216 f.]. This, it may be argued, could be the product of one life time, or essentially of a series which has preceded.

We are definitely reluctant to lend the Pali word *paññā* to refer to worldly wisdom of any sort. [Do whatever you like with the Sinhala word.]. It has always to be transcendental. For it is this wisdom which leads one on to the final

*Nibbānic* release or *vimutti* [*sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti*. loc. cit.]. From what has been said above, it becomes abundantly clear that this *paññā* we refer to here stands well outside the Eightfold Path, produced only after its completion. It also becomes equally clear that this *paññā* is the third and final item in the threefold *sikkhā* or *sikkhattaya* which leads to final liberation.

It is delightful to find Therī Dhammānā's statement to her erstwhile husband Visākha that 'While the threefold *sikkhā* [or *khandhā*] can contain within it the Noble Eightfold Path, the latter cannot contain the former.' Here is the Cūlavedalla Sutta account from the Majjhima Nikāya [MN. I. 301] which records it in full. *Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā. Thi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito.*

Thus, it is clear that *paññā* is, more or less, a full-bodied summit-level accomplishment, achieved at the end of a graduated process, aided by each preceding stage. Even *sammā samādhi* which heralds the dawn of *paññā* has seven preceding contributory factors [*satta samādhi-parikkhārā* DN. II. 216]. As for *sammā diṭṭhi*, it opens the doorway for entry into Buddhism. It is no doubt a stimulus which triggers off an intellect-bound pathway or journeying. This is evident from a study of the very next stage of No. 2 in *sammā saṅkappa*. Set in motion by the very first stage of *sammā diṭṭhi*, every Buddhist has to reorganise and reset his pattern of thinking or *saṅkappa*. Every Buddhist, in the true sense of the word, has to begin with a mind-set, organised according to instruction.

In conformity to the Buddhist ethos, every converted or convinced Buddhist has to begin with an endeavour to reduce his pursuit of pleasure. In terms of modern psychological thinking in the world, there has to be a deliberately willed delaying of gratification of sensory demands or responding to sensory stimulation. In Buddhism, this is the very first of the three *saṅkappas*. This is the *nekkhamma saṅkappa*. As its opposite stands *kāma saṅkappa* or pursuit of sensual delights.

Once these two are acquired and achieved, a newly-converted Buddhist [*āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*], we believe, is reasonably well established on the Buddhist path to liberation. He has to know that he has to think as a Buddhist and thereafter to act as a Buddhist. What truly matters here is not the fact of being born a Buddhist or being born a non-Buddhist. It is this choice and this acceptance in one's life, through the two preliminary stages of *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa* which pave the way to the growth, as a Buddhist, of the necessary wisdom or *paññā* for ultimate liberation or *vimutti*.

It is at this stage when one has necessarily to acquire a true sense of Buddhist sanity, and that through an awareness of Buddhist thinking or dhamma, that one is called upon to act and live in the Buddhist way. Are we then surprised any bit that the following three items on the path, namely 3. correct speech [*sammā vācā*], 4. correct activity [*sammā kammanto*] and 5. correct mode of making a living [*sammā ājīvo*] which unmistakably encompass the entire range of activity of a householder are correctly placed here?

Are we asking too much of any man or woman who chooses to be a Buddhist for whatever reason, if we venture to say that this and this alone is the true ascending path in the direction of liberation in Nibbāna. Undeniably, it is a formidable challenge. It is an awareness of this reality, an awareness of the challenging nature of his teaching which in his own words is *paṭisotagāmi* or upward-moving against the flow, which made the Buddha openly express his conviction that it would not be possible for the average man of the world, steeped in greed and hatred as he is, to comprehend his dhamma.

This is what he thereupon said 'Overwhelmed with greed and hatred, it shall be difficult for them to comprehend this teaching' [*rāga-dosa-paretehi nāyaṃ dhammo susambudho* P MN. I. 168]. This legendarily expressed unwillingness of the newly enlightened Buddha to deliver his message to the world is built upon this observation. We are told that he said it would be of no use making known to the world the truths which he comprehended with utmost difficulty [*kicchena me*

*adhigataṃ h'alam' dāni pakāsitum. loc. cit.].*

At any rate, the message of Buddhism was delivered, and it was universally acclaimed that it shall for ever remain irreversible or *appativattiyam*. We have already witnessed how a man of the world, on realising the true nature of the world via the teachings of Buddhism, regulates his life in order to minimise the corrosive effect which the very process of living brings upon him.

This early stage of Buddhist religious culture is and can be brought about by submitting oneself to an unostentatious organised pattern of living which goes under the name of *sīla*. It is of interest here to note that items 3, 4, and 5 of the Noble Eightfold Path virtually take care of this same territory. In the exercise of one's speech and action [i.e., *vācā* and *kammanta*], if adequate care and caution is taken, then one avoids slipping into danger zones of *akusala*, generated through greed, hatred and delusion. Here one sees the operation of *sīla-sikkhā* within the Path.

We wish to stress the point once again here that it is naturally facilitated by the effective operation of items 1 and 2 of the Path, namely corrected vision and corrected thought pattern [i.e., *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa*]. Proceeding therefrom, this honest and genuine correction of one's personal behaviour, of word and deed, prompts one to accept a pattern of livelihood or *ājīva*, i.e., a way of making a living, which is acceptable and free from blame in terms of one's religious values. If both those who preach Buddhism and those who claim to practice Buddhism are genuinely aware of these basic facts about the religion, that alone should provide sufficient pressure for the governance of the state in an acceptably Buddhist way.

Viewing it retrospectively, one's *ājīva* or way of making a living must not in any way infringe on the ethics of *pañcasīla*. It must not involve killing or aiding and abetting of it. It must not involve stealing, or any form of dishonesty like smuggling etc. So is it with trafficking in drugs or sale of alcohol. How very

conveniently do people say, individually and collectively, that they do so for want of an alternative.

We are painfully aware that both religious institutions, under whatever brand name they exist in this country and the state, on whichever side they lean at the time of our reckoning, must step forward into this area of honourable living or *sammā ājīva* to arrest the unimaginable rot and the consequent stench that is prevalent in the country today.

Freely provided material needs by way of food, clothing and entertainment to fulfil the unbridled demands of humans, without any basis of ethical and moral considerations, basically contribute to this total island-wide rot. The economic structure of the country being what it is, no identity can be established of those, neither of the state nor of the private sector, who contribute to this calamitous decay and degeneracy. Are not the policy makers in both areas of activity answerable for the evil consequences they bring about. Private and personalised economic growth on any side cannot be put forward as a justification for the national crime that is being perpetuated.

It is our opinion that in the count down for the spiritual ascent on the Path, items 3, 4, and 5 discussed above, if well practised and sincerely adhered to, are capable of pulling the layman out of his worldly moorings which keep the human tethered to all ensuing ills. It is one's thoughts of ceaselessly chasing after and enjoying the pleasures of the world which come within the periphery of *kāmā* [glamorously labelled as consumerism and gleefully held on high with out-stretched hands] which, like the gravitational pull of the earth, hinder our movement towards the blissful release in Nirvana.

Like the satellites fired off a launch pad after a precise countdown at NASA, we believe the Buddhist disciple who has conscientiously journeyed passing the first five stages on the Path and reached the sixth one of *sammā vāyāmo* [i.e. corrected striving], is now, more or less, moving up on a transcendental ascent,

having passed the earth-bound ground level, and having jettisoned all components of his earthly under-carriage which he once enjoyed.

At No. 6 or *sammā vāyāmo*, the disciple is all out for the correction and elimination of hindrances or *akusala* and acquisition of efficient supportive virtues or *kusala*. The corrected striving implied here at stage six is by no means the keenness to acquire building material for worldly structures like material prosperity such as better wages and higher positions. At No. 7 or *sammā sati*, we now witness the disciple's higher grade mind culture [i.e., virtually *adhicitta sikkhā*]. The four stages of establishing mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* is adequate proof of this. This leads, without fail, on to the final stage of the Path, namely *sammā samādhi*.

The Mahācattārisaka Sutta [MN. III. 76] tells us that the religio-cultural journey from the first stage of *sammā-diṭṭhi* to the eighth one of *sammā-samādhi*, i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path, is no more than the path-way or *paṭipadā* of the trainee [*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgato sekho paṭipado*]. It is on completing ten stages that one becomes an *arhant* [*dasāṅga-samannāgato arahā hoti*].

To those who by now have some serious need to contemplate on the worth of the religio-cultural journey of Buddhism, we have only a very few items to indicate. Begin by seeking apprenticeship to know about this new religion. The idea of new religion applies equally well even to those who are born as Buddhists, on account of their parents or even grand parents.

Remember, one needs a certified [i.e., a certificated] teacher to play this role of competent authority or *parato ghoso*, i.e., one from whom one gets the message of the *dhamma* or *saddhamma* so that you could be certified as having gained entry into it [*āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*]. You also should have the credentials yourself to examine it [*yoniso ca manasikāro*]. Take long enough to decide whether you choose to accept Buddhism or not.

Having accepted Buddhism as a way to live, now please start doing what you

are called upon to do, i.e., to restructure and re-set your thinking the Buddhist way. We are sure you will not hesitate, having shown that you are already in possession of the pre-requisite of *sammā diṭṭhi* or corrected vision. You are now on the threshold of the second stage of the Path, viz., *sammā saṅkappa*. At this stage, the first item on the agenda is *nekkhamma saṅkappa* or the endeavour to reduce chasing after pleasures of the senses [i.e. those labelled, or even stigmatised, under the category of *kāma saṅkappa*.]. Be moderate and delay gratification. We wish you luck and leave you at that.

## Lesson 5

### The Correct Observance of the Uposatha or Aṭṭa-Sil as the Dhamma indicates

[Anguttara Nikaya Vol. IV. p. 248 ff. & p. 259 ff. Uposatha Vagga]

*Translated by Professor Dhammavihari Thera*

O monks, the observance of the *uposatha*, adhering to the eightfold precepts, is highly rewarding, splendid and magnificent [*mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso mahājutiko mahāvippahāro* AN. IV. 248]. How does one live this eightfold *uposatha* to be so wonderfully effective?

Herein O monks, a noble disciple thinks thus: The arahants live all their life abandoning destruction of life, refraining from killing, laying aside all weapons of destruction. They are endowed with a sense of shame for doing evil, very benevolent and full of love and compassion for all living beings.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall abandon destruction of life, refrain from killing, laying aside all weapons of destruction. I shall be endowed with a sense of shame for doing evil, shall be benevolent and full of love and compassion for all living beings. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with this first virtue.

The arahants live all their life abandoning theft, refraining from theft, taking only what is given to them, wishing for only what is given to them. They live totally pure honest lives.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall abandon theft, and refraining from theft, taking only what is given, wishing for only what is given. I shall live a totally pure and honest life. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the



*uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with this second virtue.

The arahants live all their life abandoning unchaste life, leading a chaste life of celibacy, keeping away from rustic sex life.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*] I shall abandon unchaste life, lead a chaste life of celibacy [*brahma-cārī*], keep away from rustic practice of sex [*methunā gāma-dhammā*]. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with this third virtue.

The arahants live all their life abandoning false speech, refraining from false speech, being truthful in speech, true to their promises, honest, reliable, and not deceiving the world.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall abandon false speech, refrain from false speech, being truthful in speech, true to my promises, honest, reliable, and not deceiving the world. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with this fourth virtue.

The arahants live all their life keeping away from situations of 'error of judgement' arising from use of intoxicants. They refrain from falling into such situations.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall keep away from situations of 'error of judgement' arising from use of intoxicants. I shall refrain from falling into such situations. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with this fifth virtue.

The arahants live all their life taking only one meal a day, abstaining from the night meal and refraining from eating out of hours.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall take only one meal a day, abstaining from the night meal and refraining from eating out of hours. In this manner I shall follow the way of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with the sixth virtue.

The arahants live all their life keeping away from dance performances, song recitals, musical orchestrations and variety shows. They also abstain from the use of flower garlands, perfumes, make up material and other forms of grooming and adornments.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall also abstain from all these. In this manner I shall follow the ways of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with the seventh virtue.

The arahants live all their life abandoning seats and beds which are grand and luxurious, refraining from the use of such items. They use modest items of furniture like simple beds and grass mats.

On this day, during the day and during the night [*imañ ca rattiṃ imañ ca divasaṃ*], I shall give up the use of seats and beds which are grand and luxurious, refraining from the use of such items. I shall use modest items of furniture like simple beds and grass mats. In this manner I shall follow the ways of the arahants. My observance of the *uposatha* shall be fulfilled. He would be endowed with the eighth virtue.

O monks, the observance of the *uposatha* , adhering to the eight-fold precepts, lived in this manner is highly rewarding, splendid and magnificent.

Lesson 6  
 Non-Observance of the Uposatha  
 by Laymen and Laywomen  
 and the Buddha's Comments

[*Translated by Professor Dhammavihari Thera*]

The Buddha laments over the non-observance of regular Aṭṭa-Sil on the Uposatha day by people whose life is invariably threatened with fear of grief and fear of death. He calls it a lamentable failure [A.V. 83.].

The Buddha was once living in the land of the Sakyas at Kapilavastu in the monastery named Nigrodhārāma. At that time many Sakyan lay-devotees came to see the Buddha on that Uposatha or Fast day. They greeted him and sat down on a side in his presence. The Buddha questioned those lay-devotees who were seated in his presence.

O Sakyans, do you observe the eight-fold precepts on the Fast day of the Uposatha? O Sir, on some days we do and on some days we do not [i.e. without any regularity].

He remarked. "O Sakyas, it is very unfortunate [*Tesaṃ vo sakkā alābhā tesam dulladdham*] that you whose lives are invariably threatened with fear of grief and fear of death [*soka-sabhaye jīvite maraṇa-sabhaye jīvite*] do observe the eight fold precepts of the Fast or Uposatha only on some days and do not do so on some other days.

## Lesson 7

### Observance of Aṭṭa-Sil or Uposatha in Sri Lanka today - Needs Drastic Reforms

The observance of the eight precepts, associated with the day of the *Uposatha*, referred to hereafter as AṬṬA-SIL [*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgato uposatho* - AN. IV. 248; 259] is as old as Buddhism itself. It must be pointed out at the very outset, and that with adequate emphasis, that the seasonal observance of AṬṬA-SIL [i.e. on days of the four moons of the month, i.e. Full moon, New moon and the two Quarters of the waning and waxing moons] has to be the result of a wish for a reasonably adequate upgrading of the five moral precepts of *pañca-sīla* which every disciple or *śrāvaka* [i.e. *upāsaka* and *upāsikā*] of the Buddha is expected to follow without fail for the furtherance of his or her pursuit of the goal of Nibbāna.

There are numerous instances in Buddhist texts where the benefits of observing these basic precepts of *pañca-sīla* in the daily life of a householder are given in great detail. In the *Upāsaka Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikaya* [AN. III. 211ff.], the Buddha is seen in conversation with the venerable *Sariputta*, for the benefit of *Anāthapiṇḍika* as it were, and he seems to highlight the basic functional value of keeping the five precepts.

The perfect keeping of the five precepts [note here the words perfect keeping for which the Pali equivalent is *pañcasu sikkhā-padesu saṃvuta-kammanta*], coupled with the easy and successful acquisition of what are called the four states of 'blissful living in this very life' [*diṭṭha-dhamma-sukhavihāra*] gives one the right to claim that one is a stream-winner or *sotāpanna*, i.e. one who is infallibly on the path to Nibbāna [*niyato sambodhi-parāyano*. loc. cit.], like a river which invariably ends up in reaching the ocean.

In this context, the five precepts which refer to : 1. respect for life, 2. respect for others' ownership to their legitimately acquired possessions, 3. respect for

propriety of sex relationships, 4. respect for honesty in word and deed and 5. respect for sanity of judgement maintained by keeping away from the use of alcohol and drugs, are too well known for further elaboration here.

The four states of 'blissful living in this very life' [*ditṭha-dhamma-sukhavihāra*] which together form the other component include the three-tiered profound joy of total acceptance of and trust [*avecca-pasādena samannāgato*] in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. To this is added the high-grade sublimated moral virtues or *ariya-kanta-sīla* as the fourth item.

In this arrogant age of scientific and technological sophistication where the experts, and even the less-expert-ones, wish to be insensitive to the corrosive devastation which these very achievements bring about with them, there are many among both preachers and practitioners of Buddhism who decry this aspect of religious devotion and dedication [i.e. *saddhā* and *pasāda*] for self-correction. This aspect of religion is something which must and can be acquired only through serious religious application, by being contained within the religious framework and not by choosing to remain outside of it. The good moral life of *sīla* must be lived and not merely talked about.

Such people who opt to stand outside, for whatever self-approved reasons of their own, speak of verification of the Buddha word and make nonsense of the much abused Kālāma Sutta, trying to force out of it many things that are not found within it. Speaking of verification, let it be known that the sutta implies no testing of the truth or falsehood of the Buddha word. The request by the Buddha is for one to become experientially aware, by oneself, and not by mere acceptance and belief, of the ill effects of greed, hatred and delusion [i.e. of *lobha dosa moha*] in one's own life. Please read the sutta once again, by your self, for your self. Do not go by what the experts say, we pray.

Further to such faith in the *tisaraṇa*, [and we hope you fully well comprehend what this implies !], the fourth consists of the joy of being in the very high grades

of moral virtue or *sīla*-accomplishment [*ariya-kantehi sīlehi samannāgato hoti akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi ... samādhī-samvattanikehi*]. It is worth noting here that the Commentarial tradition rates this *ariya-kanta-sīla* as being part of the attainment of the path and its fruit [*ariyakantāni sīlānīti magga-phala-saṃyuttakāni sīlāni*]. From there on, they will not deteriorate, even in the passage from one life to another. *Tāni hi ariyānaṃ kantāni honti. Bhavantare'pi apariccajjīyāni*. AA. III. 245]. These assets which have been listed here are already regarded as factors or characteristic features of *Sotāpatti* or those leading to that state [*sotāpatti-aṅga*].

The addition of three more precepts to this set of five [*pañca-sīla*], with an upgraded version of precept No. 3 [i.e. *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*], changing chastity in sexual behaviour to one of total celibacy [*abrahmacariyā veramaṇī*], and making it the *aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgata* or the eight-fold code for observance as *uposatha* on the special days of the moon gives the *pañca-sīla* a tremendous elevation on the spiritual ascent. Let us now examine this spiritual enrichment and enhancement a little more in detail. The five precepts clearly aim at restraining people [*veramaṇī sikkhā-padam*] from misanthropic misdeeds through word and deed like destruction of life, misappropriation of property, and sexual improprieties. Even apart from the efficiency or otherwise of the law enforcement authority of a country, these five are offences which any decent or cultured society would frown upon. Lamentably, almost everywhere in the world, such societies today are becoming a thing of the past.

When we come to the seasonal observance of the four additional precepts under *uposatha-sīla*, we discover that they aim at a further degree of discipline-structuring for the lay community, desirable not only from a purely institutional religious angle, but also from a personal religio-ethical angle. They include, for the specified period of twentyfour hours, *a.* total rejection of sexual gratification, *b.* rejection of regular normal meals after mid-day, i.e. the night meal and any other irregular eating [*rattūparato virato vikāla-bhojanā*], *c.* rejection of customary

musical and theatrical entertainment and personal bodily grooming [*nacca- gīta- vādita- visūkadassana- mālā- gandha- vilepana- dhāraṇa- maṇḍana- vibhūsana- t̥thānā*], as well as *d.* rejection of extra-comfortable luxury-type beds and seats which are normally used by laymen in the household. They all imply a choice in the direction of austerity and curtailment, i.e. a reduction in the pursuit of pleasure or *nekkhamma*.

This is well and truly the *sīla-bhāvanā* which one needs to initially embark upon [*sīle patit̥thāya*], if one has any serious thoughts about Nibbana as one's final goal of salvation. In their order of 3, 6, 7, and 8, the efficiency and perfection of the practice of these *sikkhāpadas* are all to be checked and tested through the duration of the collective day and night division, *divasaṃ* and *rattiṃ* of the *uposatha*. This is why the Buddhist monks of countries like Thailand and Burma, with an appreciable sense of seriousness, honesty and understanding, make known to their lay community the significance of this day and night observance of the *uposatha* before they administer to them the *aṭṭhaṅga-sīla* on *uposatha* days.

These observations we have made herein expose the serious blunder of the half-day observance of *aṭṭa-sīl* carried on at present in Sri Lanka, under the cover of the ingenious but diabolic mechanism of what is referred to as *pavāraṇā*. We discover day after day, to our grievous lament, that hundreds of lay persons of Sri Lanka are totally unaware of this serious blunder through which they are being led, more or less blind-folded, by persons who are obviously ill-informed and ignorant and are not honourably responsible in what they do. The devotees confess this to us, quite often with tears in their eyes. It is regrettable, but it is not a day too early to throw the challenge and make bold to ask the question 'Who in this country, monk or laymen, keeps the truth away and keep away from whom?'

We have already noted above that the 3<sup>rd</sup> precept of chastity or propriety of sexual behaviour is now upgraded under the *uposatha* to one of total celibacy or *abrahmacariyā veramaṇī*. Note that today this 3<sup>rd</sup> precept which unmistakably refers to sexual impropriety is being disastrously and lamentably misinterpreted

as sensual misbehaviour, with a whole host of far-reaching evil consequences. A recent book, published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, in 2005, under the title *Walking the Tight Rope* [see its page 82] is a good example of this.

What is to be specially noted is that these 4 additional *sikkāpadas* involve a self-imposed discipline extending through both day and night [*imañ ca divasaṃ imañ ca rattiṃ* AN.IV. 248 ff. & 259 ff.], of twenty-four hours duration. They anticipate and more or less approximate with the newly emerging disciplinary patterns like 'delay gratification' coming to us now from the believed-to-be more sophisticated western world.

Note:

"Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with. It is the only decent way to live."

The Road Less Traveled by M. Scott Peck , p. 19.

Dr. Peck tells us further:

'This tool or process of scheduling is learned by most children quite early in life, sometimes as early as age five. ... While many have a well-developed capacity to delay gratification, some fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds seem to have hardly developed this capacity at all; indeed, some seem even to lack the capacity entirely. They are the problem students. ...

They are impulsive, and their impulsiveness spills over into their social life as well. They get into frequent fights, they become involved with drugs, they begin to get in trouble with the police. Play now, pay later, is their motto. So the psychologists and psychotherapists are called in. But most of the time it seems too late.' [loc. cit.].

The disciplinary process through carefully planned self-abnegation which is implied here, [it must not be missed], is also the vital ingredient of the disciplinary



process of the *uposatha*. It is a self-opted rejection of what one could possibly enjoy. And this process of rejection or *veramaṇī*, everybody would know, does bring in a wave of disciplining pain.

Very few people in Sri Lanka know that the Sinhala word *pehe vas* or its Pali equivalent *uposatha* comes from the original Indian idea of *upa + vasati* which means to observe a fast, i.e. keep away from partaking of food. Monier-Williams Sanskrit - English Dictionary [p. 206] explains *upa + vasati* at ŚBr. as 'to abide in a state of abstinence, abstain from food, fast.' It further explains *upa-vāsa* as 'a fast, fasting ( as a religious act comprising abstinence from all sensual gratification, from perfumes, flowers, unguents, ornaments, betel, music, dancing &c.), Gaut.'

This indeed is the vital and vibrant aspect of the *uposatha* in the Indian religious culture. The Buddhists gratefully took over this for their basic religious apprenticeship..

In the Buddhist *uposatha* of the eight-fold code [*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgata-uposatha*], all the above concepts of the Brahmanic tradition [which includes even the abstinence from the use of betel, i.e. Sinhala *bulaṭ*] seem to be included. These are contained in the precepts 6, 7, and 8 which are reckoned also as part of discipline of the monk under *Cūla-sīla* at [DN. I. 5 & 64] which are added on to the *pañca-sīla* of regular day to day observance. In addition to this, one has to take serious note of the revised version of precept No. 3 of the *Pañcasīla* as *abrahmacariyā veramaṇī* in the re-structuring of the *Aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*.

Precept No. 6 of the *aṭṭhaṅga uposatha* lays special emphasis on the concept of the fast. It is very specific about this. It clearly forbids the night meal [*rattiṃ na bhuñje* at Sn. v. 400. At DN. I. 64. it is included under the *Cūla-sīla* of the monk as *rattūparato*. See also DN. I. 5 for its inclusion as a virtue of the Buddha.]. In addition, it also lays a ban on eating out of hours, both for the *uposathika* and the monk [*uposathika // na vikāla-bhojanaṃ* at Sn. v. 400, and for

the monk // *virato vikāla-bhojanā* at DN.I. 64. Also at DN.I. 5 as above].

Note the totality of this discipline about food for the monk elaborated under *Cūla-sīla* at DN.I. 5 & 64 as *Eka-bhattiko hoti rattūparato virato vikāla-bhojanā*. As a discipline for the *uposathika*, it is adequately clear and specific at Sn. v. 400: *rattim na bhuñjeyya vikālabhojanaṃ*. His fast in the night and his abstinence from eating out of hours during the day, throughout his observance of the *uposatha*, are unmistakably indicated in the Commentary [SnA. 1.377] on the above quoted verse: *Rattim na bhuñjeyya vikālabhojanan'ti rattim'pi na bhuñjeyya divā'pi kālātikkanta-bhojanaṃ na bhuñjeyya*. [Backed by this Commentarial explanation, we prefer to read the above verse as *rattim na bhuñje na vikāla-bhojanaṃ*, clearly identifying *rattibhojana* and *vikāla-bhojana* as two different items.]. This comment clearly presents two ideas, namely 1. the fast at night and 2. abstaining from eating out of hours during the day.

In spite of this unmistakable clarity both in the text and the Commentary regarding the discipline in the food habits of both the *uposathika* and the monk, we notice a very grave error in the translation of the said verse in the Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series. It takes *vikāla-bhojana* as 'not taking a night-meal which is reckoned a meal out of hours': *vikāla-bhojana-saṅkhyāta rātri-bhojana no valandaneya* [BJTS Vol. XXV Sutta Nipata, p. 121].

We are also very distressed that the PTS Pali-English Dictionary, in its explanation of the term *uposatha*, makes no mention at all about this aspect of its observance, namely the fast. [It deals more with the monastic ritual observances of the *uposatha*]. The very basic idea of the *fast* of the laymen does not come in at all, except in a single reference to the word *uposathika*. A vast range of invaluable information is thereby lamentably lost to the student of Pali, and hence also to the student of Buddhism. We are equally unhappy with the entry which reads as follows: 'On Up. days laymen take upon themselves the Up. vows, that is to say, the eight Silas, during the day.' This phrasing On Up. days laymen ... during the day. seems to imply to us that the laymen take upon themselves the

precepts only for the day and not for the night.

Whichever way this rendering is taken, let us emphatically add that the Buddhists must take their eight precepts of the *uposatha*, for observance during both day and night of the *uposatha* day [*imañ ca divasaṃ imañ ca rattim* . AN. IV. 248 ff. & 259 ff. See also Sn. v. 403 *Tato ca pāto upavuttha + uposatho* which clearly indicates that one speaks of having concluded the *uposatha* only on the following morning.].

It must also be very strictly remembered that the Buddhist concept of *uposatha* requires total abstinence from the night meal [*rattūparato*]. It is equally distressing to find the Sri Sumangala Sinhala Sabda-kosaya of Venerable Sorata Thera guilty of this same omission of leaving out the reference to abstinence from the night meal in its definition of *pehe-vas* [taking only *vikāla-bhojanā* and completely turning a blind eye to *rattūparato* . This is his entry: *pehe vas = vikālayehi ahara nogena visīma, aṣṭāṅgasīlaya*].

In the light of these observations which we make, based entirely on the evidence of Pali Buddhist texts, we are compelled to make certain critical remarks about what goes on in Sri Lanka as *sīla-vyāpāra* or keeping of the *uposatha*. The changing nature of things in the world or *anicca* as a crucial characteristic of all phenomenal existence does not necessarily justify changes in religious thinking or restructuring religious institutions which are derived from them. And this, according to the whims and fancies of monks and laymen, no matter from where.

Within the last forty or fifty years, Sri Lankans appear to have changed or transformed their observance of the *uposatha* and reduced it to a half-day [to 10 out of 24 hours and virtually to 5 out of 8 precepts] program. It is tragic that it does not seem to survive even from dawn to dusk. It lasts even much less. We have even heard of mothers who manipulate to terminate early the eight precepts which their children have taken in the morning to enable them to take their

biscuits and milk tea in the afternoon. Shockingly misguided motherly love and miserable failures in parental leadership in the home.

That people have many things to do in the course of a day [i.e. one single day out of a 28, 29, 30 or 31 day month], or that they must necessarily return home by night [for the safeguarding of whatever they may hold dear] does not justify this curtailment. We hold the view that this high-handed pruning is thoroughly disgraceful and completely negates the very spirit of the *uposatha*. They may very well change the venue of the *uposatha* in the course of a single day [if return home they must], but they must continue the observance of the totality of the precepts they have taken upon themselves.

More than forty or fifty years ago in the heat of the Buddha Jayanti excitement there was a keen interest, and perhaps justifiably so, to attract more and more people to places of worship. To do this successfully, there was perhaps also the need to make many concessional offers. Shorter and less demanding programs of religious activity could have been an attractive bait. The result of this would have been a flattering turn up at the more popular temples, particularly at the metropolitan ones. The competitively attractive outcome of this would also have intoxicated some of the publicity-seeking institutions. But simplification in many areas of society today have resulted in malnutrition. Religion is no exception to this. But unmindful of this degeneracy, many institutions would make loud announcements about their increasing attendance on the *uposatha* days.

Leadership among monks and laymen in Sri Lanka often joined hands in assuring people that what would normally be a more rigorous program of strict observances could be redesigned to fit into a much shorter period of time. And also with a lot more of listen-in items than do-it-yourself ones. Many *popular preachers*, both monk and layman, would wax eloquent on such platforms on many currently popular subjects like *bhāvanā* and scientific interpretations of the dhamma. And this to audiences who are less inclined to believe in the reality of

rebirth and would rather prefer to make supplication to *living gods* who are imported from anywhere for the fulfilment of their day to day wishes and needs, like gifts of gold and silver and success at various undertakings like examinations of their children and interviews and promotions of their spouses. These programs are attractively studded with intermittent benedictory chants of *parittas* at which the lay community are, in many institutions, invited to join the monks to chant in sing song style.

The more serious part of the *uposatha*, the abstinences and the fasting were deliberately forgotten and completely cut out. The assurance of getting back home well before sunset was the key to the success of this newly introduced *sīlavāpāra*. Free meals at lunch time were generously provided. The *uposatha* day's few additions to the regular daily *pañcasīla* which were coming in to be tested at night time, like the choice to reject eating in the night, or sitting down to enjoy diverse forms of entertainment came to be disowned and disinherited by evening, through the ingenious [but stupid] new formulary called the *pavāraṇā* [We only know of the village *mantara-kāraya* or *kaṭṭadiya* using this word *pavāraṇā* in the sense of concluding his *mantra* chanting when he says *pavāranayi tīnduyi*].

An older or younger monk, apparently totally ignorant of what he is doing, would administer *pansil* to an audience to terminate their *uposatha*, who unwittingly though, had pledged that self same morning to observe the eight precepts, without any awareness whatsoever that it was for twenty-four hours, or without ever being told by any one that it was to be so [*imañ ca divasaṃ imañ ca rattim*].

Well before the sun has set, the temple premises would be emptied and cleared of the crowd, with the very vital contents of the *uposatha sīla* [nos. 3, 6, 7, and 8] being left behind in the temple yard, by many if not all, to be salvaged only from the garbage bins. What a sad scenario for a twenty-five centuries old Buddha, to behold such a decline and devastation of his dispensation? The

devotees who had spent a carnival-like rush day, with very little time to peacefully absorb anything from their spiritual grooming would be sent back home with a flattering note that they would now be free to eat, sing and dance and be even free to use as they like their beds [*uccāsayana-mahāsayana*] as laymen would do on any day of the month. Even if not intended, everyone knows this is the net result of an *uposatha* day's grand performance. No more no less.

What do we Buddhists think? Forget about it all or think of any possible or necessary reforms? Sri Lankan Buddhist institutions, both of the monks and the laymen, heavily structured as they are, are far too involved and for the same reason far too insensitive to apprehend any of the threatening dangers that lie ahead of us. Like the Pyramids of the Nile Valley, let them be as they are and where they are, maintaining their heavenward towering massive institutional statures. Let them serve in any capacity they think they can. But we believe that among Buddhist individuals, the saner men and women of this country, there are many who are both capable and are anxious to rethink on their past and re-plan their future, both for their own sake and for the sake of their unborn children and grandchildren.

They could very well make their own temples within their family structures, incorporating all the younger and the older, the males and the females, not to speak of the currently alienated in-laws of all ranks. They only need to gather themselves together and humbly invite the Buddha into their homes. We cannot do without him. Even though there are many in the country today who are already registered to be future Buddhas. Our old *Iti'pi so bhagavā* would only be too glad to come, in response to the reverberating honesty and grandeur of the words *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa* which should emanate from the lips of the genuine liberation seekers.

We all need to kneel before him and apologise to him for our blasphemous behaviour in his name and in his presence. We do not need too many middle men. Let us thereafter live directly under the shadow of his teachings.

We also have a few preliminaries to attend to. We need first to rediscover a little bit of the old *dhamma*. The Abhidhamma, we could be sure, would find its way into its rightful place in due course. The real dhamma teachings in the Suttas about *dukkha* and *nirodha* as taught by the Buddha have to be surfaced foremost. Some things about the Four Noble Truths and about actualising them in our own lives come next: *ti-parivattam dvādsākāram* as taught in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. This, we believe, has to be learnt anew. Hardly have we heard it being ever preached, over any media in the land today, by the Grand Masters who present themselves there. We need a better grasp of the teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path, more in their sequential gradual order to live and to develop, each stage of the *magga* in succession.

We need to acquire our *sammā-dit̥ṭhi* as the first and initial item on the path to Nibbana and not be blindly led to believe that it is equal to *paññā* of the three-fold training of *sila - samādhi - paññā*. Let it be reminded again and again that if one looks after the graduated eight-fold way and reach the eighth stage of *sammā-samādhi* [yet within the *magga* itself], then *paññā* as the ninth stage [beyond the *magga*], will invariably greet one there and gladly usher him into the tenth stage of *vimutti* or release in Nibbana: ... *sammā-samādhissa sammā-nāṇam pahoti sammā nāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti. Iti kho bhikkhave aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgato sekho paṭipado dasaṅga-samannāgato arahā hoti.* [MN.III. 76 Mahācattāṭṭhaka Sutta]. While on the Eightfold Path, one is still only a learner [*sekho*] and it is only after the acquisition of *paññā* that one qualifies for the status of *arahant*. You need to go through this stage in any case, no matter through which of the *bodhi* out of *tuntarā* one wishes to go.

In the light of what we have said so far, let us endeavour to restore gradually, and very gradually indeed, the *uposatha* in its full stature back into the lives of our laymen and laywomen, even away from the temples, if we are driven to do so. With *tisaraṇa* well set in their hearts [... *buddhe dhamme saṅghe aveccappasādena samannāgato*], the really earnest Buddhists could well afford

to do with much less of the side-attractions of *bodhi-pūjā* and *deva-pūjā* which the temples invariably offer in comforting but invariably confusing profusion, thoughtlessly subscribing to so-called contemporary needs.

Domesticise your Buddhism a little more [i.e. live with it as you live your household life] and make its achievements a source of personal joy in life in your own home. This is what we referred earlier as this-life blissful living or *diṭṭha-dhamma-sukha-vihāra* [AN.III. 211]. One must gain mastery over them and learn to acquire them with ease [... *abhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihārānaṃ nikāmalābhiṃ akicchālābhiṃ akasiralābhiṃ* loc.cit.]. This should verily be so to you and to everyone in your family. The need of the day is a vibrant Buddhist sensitivity to the real truths of the *dhamma* and a meaningfully constructive Buddhist co-operation.



Lesson 8  
Meditation Retreats  
and Aṭṭhaṅga-Uposatha-Sīla

**A Plea for a Happy Wedlock**

During periods of Buddhist Meditation Retreats [specially in Buddhist Sri Lanka today] we wish to build within our devotees a dignified sense of religious discipline which we expect them to carry over thereafter to their daily lives, in the home, the work place and the community at large. Primarily, this shall be the very basis of what we can call meditation in Buddhism. We cannot think of a Buddhist Meditation Retreat without a serious sense of personal discipline, i.e. a restraint or control we bring upon ourselves, centering on meditation. Through meditation, Buddhist teachings attempt to bring about changes in the behavior of people for their own elevation and emancipation. At every stage, meditation must indicate an estimable growth, a journeying forward.

In Buddhism, we use the Pali word *bhāvanā* to refer to this process of bringing about such changes in the life style or culture of a people. Good people are said to possess cultured bodies and cultured minds: *bhāvita-kāyo bhāvita-citto*, i.e. cultured physically and mentally. That is refinement of body and mind brought about through endeavored application or *sikkhā* [which is yet another word for *bhāvanā*]. This is said to lead to a further advancement in cultured wisdom or intellectual development [i.e. *bhāvita-pañño* See AN. I, 249].

This is wisdom of a type which the world very badly needs today and is different from the freely available knowledge in stock which is known to be in the hands of every power block, utilizable for purposes of mass destruction. This man-acquired knowledge has descended to such low levels of vulgarity as a marketable product. It is deadly in its use as was shown in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is blasphemous that it has continued its research throughout,

secretly [or not so secretly], in the so-called developed world of civilized man, until it was suspected or detected as undeclared baggage on world platforms in recent years, resulting in fictitious products as weapons of mass destruction.

In the world of the Buddhists, man is instructed to culture his own wisdom, personally for his own edification and enlightenment. He does not get it at the feet of another, or through prayer and supplication. A man of wisdom, in his enlightenment, is indeed the solace of mankind. That is what Siddhartha Gautama of India turned out to be. In his perfection of wisdom, so benevolent to mankind, he became globally renowned as Sammā Sambuddha or Buddha Śākyamuni. He did not descend to earth as Buddha from above. In his acquisition of wisdom as a human, he rose above mankind. This marked his ascent above the world. This we call his transcendence. A being of the world, a human, rose above the world. He became *lokuttara*. Within five hundred years, in the world of the Mahāyāna, he came to be transformed to an eternally existing Buddha, existing through time and space [more vibrantly existing as the concept of Buddhahood or being Enlightened]. This is the genesis of Buddha Amida. More precisely, he is both Amitābha [*Amita + ābha*] or Buddha of Infinite Light spreading through space and Amitāyu [*Amita + āyu*] or Buddha of Infinite Life stretching through time.

Now to turn to meditation or *bhāvanā* in Buddhism. The word literally means to develop, 'make grow' or 'culture' as when we use the term tissue-culture etc. in the laboratory. To begin with, *bhāvanā* is primarily the culture and growth of the human, in terms of his moral goodness, i.e. the improvement in the basic inter-personal relationships among people. Primarily not in isolation or segregation. That is where we begin and where we have to begin. Its initial area of development is called *sīla-bhāvanā*. Buddhism insists that its religious culture [or spiritual culture, if you prefer a more sophisticated phrase], which finally leads to Nibbāna, has to begin with this initial moral culture of *sīla*. This process of religious culture or training in Buddhism is also adequately contained under the

term *sikkhā*.

*Sīle patitthāya naro sapañño  
cittaṃ paññañ ca bhāvayaṃ  
ātāpī nipao bhikkhu  
so imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ.*

Samyutta Nikāya I.13

Establishing oneself in moral goodness, a wise man brings about the culture of his mind and his wisdom.

Such an ardent and judicious mendicant does

Disentangle this tangle [of Saṃsāric involvement].

Translated by the author

It spins around a discipline with regard to the way we humans think, speak and act, i.e. our thought, word and deed. [As for regulating our lives, *sīla* primarily looks after our external conduct.]. Very summarily, it is a behavior pattern, something about which we, in the midst of humans, got to be both responsible and careful. And about this, we also need to remember, that the law of the land [except during periods of anarchy] can question us and prosecute us if we do not conform to accepted patterns of propriety. Of course, at the same time, many lamentable breaches of that much esteemed propriety can and does take place, unknown to and unseen by the law-enforcing authorities of the land. This is seen and known to be very common today, everywhere.

Nevertheless, such bad behavior would still come to be condemned by the judgement of the wiser people. We expect this would happen all the time, specially in the hands of parents, educators in the land and the religious clergy. Buddhist thinking takes very serious note of this area of moral goodness and calls upon every one to abstain from even the smallest of the offences regarding which the wisdom of the land would frown upon and give a verdict of accusation and chastisement. An excellent Highway Code of Good Living exists among the

Buddhists under the name of Metta Sutta which requires people to pay high esteem to Trust-worthy Public Opinion. *Na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci yena viññū pare upavadeyyaṃ* [Sn. v. 145]: Indulge not in any such mean acts of behavior on account of which the wise people in the world would censure.

Now a little bit more of serious Buddhist thinking about this. In our daily life, we are led into activity by our thoughts: *cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti*. Anguttara Nikaya [ AN. I. 156 ] clearly indicates how our thinking process of *ceteti* is all the time determined by the roots of evil within us, namely greed, hatred and delusion [i.e. *lobha dosa moha*]. Our thoughts are the products of our own mind or *mano*. The mind is where our thoughts have their origin and are cultivated and grown - *Mano-pubbaṅgmā dhammā mano-seṭṭhā manomayā* [Dhp. vv. 1 & 2].

It is important for us Buddhists to know that we human beings do not start our life process for the first time in our mother's womb here. We go back in time much further than that. The universe we live in is seen to stretch much further than that in time and space. The stars we see in the sky are indicative of the infinitely vast solar systems in outer space. Do not be too sure about ourselves as being made-to-order products down here in the market place. We have been in circulation from time unknown. We bring into our lives many things from the past.

We got to accept that a good percentage of the happiness and unhappiness that we now go through here is not unrelated to the behavior pattern we have indulged in our previous and former lives. Verses 1 & 2 of the Dhammapada, already quoted above, very specifically express this idea: *manasā ce paduṭṭhena ... dukkhaṃ anveti | manasā ce pasannena ... sukhaṃ anveti*. Our success here also depends to some extent on our past: *pubbe ca kata-puññatā ... etaṃ maṅgalaṃ uttamaṃ* [Sn. v. 260]. Even our good health and our ability to live a longer span of life depend on our trans-*saṃsāric* culture. That depends on how much respect we pay, as we live, to the lives of others. Those who destroy life are bound to be short-lived.

The Buddha has referred to our life process as being infinitely vast [*anamataggā'yaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro* SN. II. 179] and said that its first beginnings are not easily discernible [*pubbā koṭi na paññāyati*. Ibid.]. Each one of us is wrapped up in a veil of ignorance [*avijjā-nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ* Ibid.] and we continue rolling on, bundled up by craving [*taṇhā saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam* Ibid.].

Every time we commence a life process in a mother's womb, even as a test-tube-baby within a surrogate mother, we are said to bring on to the scene within the mother a *samsāric*-continuance to be coupled with the parental contribution called the zygote, carrying with it one's own trans-*samsāric* qualities [pluses and minuses] of efficiency or inefficiency, genius or degeneracy. This is, well and truly, the unquestionable qualitative continuance of humans in the life process called *samsāra*. This is what makes possible the presence of Buddhas and Arahants as well as the less elegant people like Devadattas and Angulimālas. More and more people are now beginning to believe the same about the appearance of Mozarts and Einsteins, in spite of the escalating ventures in the area of cloning.

We should now commence our Meditation Retreat [Buddhist Meditation of course !], promising to go through it while being established on the higher plane of *Aṭṭhaṅga Uposatha* or the Higher Grade of Eightfold Morality. This alone gives the pursuants of Meditation a firm and solid foundation for a course of religious culture which would be worthy of its name. Do we believe that a Buddhist cannot commence with such a foundation? The average lay person, man or woman, is believed to have already disciplined himself or herself on the basis of the *pañca-sīla* or the five basic precepts. Such a human has no fear or dread within himself on any account. This, the religious community or clergy, must constantly and adequately remind the lay community about.

Whatever high or low position the Buddhist occupies in society, he has offended none through disrespect for life. He or she has to be unquestionably

above board on that. He has dispossessed none of their legitimately acquired possessions. He is also above board as far as propriety of sex relations [i.e. in the Buddhist way of *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*] are concerned. He is impeccably honest in all his dealings, in public and in private. His sanity of judgement is unimpaired and adequately guarded by keeping away from intoxicants and drugs. He is not evilly inclined towards any. Nor does any body has any need to dread him, or be suspicious of his behavior. The observance of *pañca-sīla* immunizes him from the five-fold enmity and dread, i.e. *vera* and *bhaya*. He is qualified, without the slightest trace of doubt, for complete stability and security for life in the world. He is also on that account guaranteed a good birth after death [*dhammo pāpeti suggaṭiṃ*].

It is such a human, man or woman, who alone is fit to be tested on a launch-pad, for a count-down for his spiritual ascent. In his choice of the *Aṭṭhaṅga Uposatha* or the Higher Grade Eightfold Morality, he has to be aware that he is facing a twenty-four hour count-down, i.e. a test through a period of day and night [*imañca divasaṃ imañca rattiṃ* as the Buddhist texts clearly specify]. First and foremost, it is the engineers who handle this operation of administering *Aṭṭhaṅga Uposatha* or the Higher Grade Eightfold Morality who have to know this and be honest about it. The world has always the right to hold tribunals to question miscreant offenders as to what they do at their assigned jobs.

In the observance of the *uposatha*, this elevation to the higher grade eight-fold morality is to be viewed as a cultural development of one's life style. As an endeavor for the acquisition of a higher grade of essential discipline, it requires a seasonal abandonment during a minimum period of twenty-four hours, of certain areas of sensory gratification. It begins with item No.i, i.e. the complete change from moral chastity of *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī* to one of complete celibacy or sexual abstinence of *abrahmacariyā veramaṇī* during this period of up-graded training.

It next picks up item No.ii, i.e. one's attitude to food. It calls for an immediate

reduction of the frequency of eating. Buddhism considers this a vital item of discipline. Placing a ban on the eating at night [*rattūparato*], it also strictly regulates against eating at irregular hours between meals [*virato vikāla-bhojanā*]. Buddhist teachings are very specific about their teachings on religious living and eating habits. The Buddha very clearly states that the ability to have restraint with regard to one's eating habits implies an ability to restrain oneself with regard to all sensory stimuli [*kabalīnkāra-āhāre pariññāte pañca-kāmaguṇīkarāgo pahīno hoti*. SN. II. 99].

Elsewhere, in the Bhaddāli Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya [MN.I.437f.], he tells his disciples of his own abstinence with regard to food, or more specifically about his one-meal-a-day or *ekāsana-bhojana* habit. He enumerates to them the physical advantages he derives from this, the ease and comfort and freedom from disease [*appābādhatañ ca appātaṅkatañ ca balañ ca phāsuvihārañ ca*]. The psycho-physical advantages of regulated eating habits in Buddhism is not to be underestimated.

The *at̥ṭhaṅga-uposatha-sīla* thereafter moves over to iii. the peripheral territory of self-entertainment through the eye and the ear. As reduction and curtailment of personal entertainment, acts of listening to musical performances [*gīta-vādita*] and seeing dancing and theatrical displays [*nacca* and *visūka-dassana*] are carefully itemized. These *sikkhāpadas* or items of training 7 and 8 carefully aim at reduction of personal rejoicing. So is the thrust at personal grooming and beautification under *mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsana*. Tightening the belt around personal self-pampering pertaining to physical comfort, witnesses also iv. regulations regarding extravagant seats, couches and bedding [*uccāsayana-mahāsayanā veramaṇī*]. It is not the height and size of the beds one sleeps on that matters.

Seeking permission to enjoy a shower bath, cold or warm, with or without soaps and shampoos, during a minimal twenty-four hour period of *at̥ṭhaṅga-uposatha*, appears quite a bit frivolous, whether in the city or in the village. The

primary aim of these restrictions is the reduction of the quality and grade of comfort sought, during this self-sought period of discipline seeking.

In the observance of the *uposatha*, it is what, in sober moments of sanity, can be viewed as dispensable extravagance with regard to personal needs relating to food, comforts and entertainment and sex that one can easily cut off, that one needs to dispense with, even seasonally, as a first step in the direction of personal discipline.

In our Buddhistness. if we wish, with a sense of sincerity, to acquire these qualitative differences in our own lives, at least making a start somewhere, let us think twice about our wish to observe these areas of self-imposed abstinence under the *aṭṭhaṅga-uposatha-sīla*, during their specified period of observance, i.e. of minimal twenty-four hours. This, we should do, comparing ourselves with the refined and cultured religious traditions of Thailand and Myanmar. Then and only then would we have laid the necessary solid and stable foundation for the glittering towers of *samatha* and *vipassanā* which we ambitiously keep eyeing all the time.



## Lesson 9

### Disintegration and Degradation of Religiousness in the Life of a Buddhist

In my sermon to you today, let me place before you some of the words of caution uttered by the Buddha with regard to possible mishaps that would befall the *Sāsana*, i.e. his religious dispensation. This would be as a result of the errors of judgement and incorrect behaviour of those who come to join him as disciples, both as monks and laymen.

The Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 206] refers to five failings of a lay devotee or *upāsaka* which make him or her a despicable person [*caṇḍāla*] within the dispensation. These are words of which we need to take serious note and act upon promptly, if we wish to save ourselves and save the dispensation. The five traits of such offensive character are that a person

1. Lacks in trust and faith in his own religious creed [*assaddho hoti*].
2. Is deficient in personal moral virtue [*dussīlo hoti*].
3. Superstitiously holds on to what is believed to be auspicious and luck-bringing [*koṭūhala-maṅgaliko hoti*].
4. Looks up to self-operative luck. He is no man of self-corrective action [*maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi no kammaṃ*].
5. Seeks those worthy of honour outside his own creed and offers them priority of respect [*ito bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyaṃ gavesati tattha ca pubbakāraṃ karoti*].

An *upāsaka* who errs in these areas is severely chastised in no uncertain terms. He is called a *pariah* or *caṇḍāla* in his own category [*upāsaka-caṇḍālo*]. He is also called a blot on his own community [*upāsaka-malaṃ*]. He is an outcast, he is a reject [*upāsaka-patikuṭṭho*]. At least in the days of the Buddha or in the true religious atmosphere of the Buddhist community, these words were

pungent enough to correct the erring flock.

Besides, in the early days of the Sāsana, seduction from outside was neither glamorous nor attractive enough to siphon Buddhists out of their well-saddled position in their own religious setup. They were more than satisfied with their progress via their own religion, both in terms of the progress in this life and in the life beyond this. Apparently, nor were the people of the time that aggressively competitive for social escalation as they are today, to seek aid from petty alien sources, human or divine. With such fool-proof safeguards built in, it is more than unbelievable that in the course of history these anti-corrosive words have not adequately fallen on the ears of at least the faithful.

But we are certain that it is to a very much more discerning group that the Buddha, in his day, decided to address his words: *ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddham* = 'Let those who have ears to hear, let them direct their attention.' In a setting like this, it is lamentable to note in Sri Lanka today that religious veneration of whole families of parents and their young children, including even the much older generation of in-laws on both sides, is skilfully directed with meticulous care on to the favour-granting self-proclaimed divinities of terrestrial origin : healers and fortune-magnates. Men, women and children of Sri Lanka seek intimate companionship with them, very much taken up by their flattering remarks and believing in their acts of grace, and their infallibility in granting favours of whatever sort that are asked.

In terms of genuine Buddhist thinking, we are compelled to observe that this kind of treacherous Buddhist behaviour falls far below the level of beg, borrow or steal. It is unquestionably an act of betrayal. As clan ethics of a specific creed where these divinities have their origin and rightly belong, one may readily condone them. But not as acts of bigamy in a monogamous society, on the part of Buddhists. It is virtually adulterous behaviour. But today, young or old, who knows about or is worried about such such behaviour?

It is tragic if Buddhists have lost their vision of one man one woman relationship in their religious dedication to their Master, as the one and only guide in their life. This is much more fundamental than conjugal fidelity in married life which the fashionable men and women of the world today have thrown to the winds. It will be worthwhile checking your own identity on this. *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aṅṅaṃ Buddho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ*. These words mean: 'I have no other refuge. The Buddha is my supreme refuge.' This is not a mere lip service to one's Master. In Buddhism, it has to be a multipurpose religious wedlock.

Of the five degrading items in the life of an *upāsaka*, i.e. a Buddhist lay-devotee, numbers one and two indicate the absence of two vital religious ingredients in his life. One cannot lay any claim to being a Buddhist without a trust in the efficiency of the Master and in the efficacy of the way propounded by him. Whatever scriptural authority one quotes in one's favour, there is no denial whatsoever that this basic trust is what the early Buddhist texts call *śraddhā*, i.e. a disciple begins by placing one's trust in the Master.

Early Buddhist texts refer to it as *so taṃ dhammaṃ sutvā tathāgate saddhaṃ paṭilabhati*. MN.I.179 [= He having heard the dhamma, generates trust in the Master.]. This *śraddhā* or trusting in [i.e. setting one's heart upon] generates a willingness in one who listens to the teachings of the Buddha to try out the dhamma oneself. We never hear of a disciple's desire or need to test its correctness or otherwise. In here there is no implication whatsoever of a disciple putting the Buddha's teaching through an acid test. It is *appaṭivattiyaṃ*, i.e. irreversible or unassailable. Therefore unquestionable. So does the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta tells us. Experience the truth yourself [*ehi passika* = come and see it yourself.]. Nothing else, did the Buddha say to any body.

Based on this virtue of possession of *śraddhā*, the other is the need for self-improvement in moral graduation called *sīla*. *Dussīlo* implies its absence. No religiousness whatsoever, grows without it. Can any religious teacher, no matter what his brand name is, meditation master or promoter of *paramattha desanā*

[metaphysical interpretation], get his flock anywhere without promoting this basic grounding in *sīla*? Has anybody in Sri Lanka got any sense of priorities in Buddhism today? The recurrent theme in Buddhist graduation is 'Establish oneself in *sīla* first, then proceed to the culture of the mind and wisdom.'

We are prompted today by instant foods, ready-made garments, refrigerators which serve you with no fuss no frost. Your motor cars are fitted with automatic gears and safety air bags. Everything is undoubtedly to your liking. You would indeed have Buddhism also put into that category, to serve you as you need. Those who deal with religion are also willing to do it for you. They are already doing it. They even tell us that they cannot always afford to come out with the truth to their lay followers. Are we not all rushing for a gold at the Olympics, even without a pair of running shoes?

At all temple ceremonies and at state functions, it has been customary to begin proceedings with what is referred to as *Tisaraṇa Pansil*. It is our belief that at these functions, they all know what they are saying. But we are in doubt whether they fully take in the implications of what they say. If it is going to be more than a mere formality, *Tisaraṇa* would require a complete avowal of faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as the only guiding religious principles in the lives of those who pledge their loyalty in this manner. There cannot be any subsidiary divinities anywhere in the neighbourhood, in your own premises or in the premises of your good neighbour, for whose grace and goodwill even the state, i.e. those who rule over us and the people who are ruled by them, secretly and openly pray.

Further to this, *Pansil* requires wholehearted loyalty to the observance of the five precepts of the *pañcasīla*. In Buddhism, it is undeniably a universal ethic of good living. In the legendary accounts of the Cakkavatti king, it is claimed that these are adequate for the successful governance of any state, without the need for any political rivalry for restructuring or demolition of those in power. More than the whole of the Fundamental Human Rights of the United Nations is covered by

them. Does *Tisarāṇa Pansil*, soullessly wielded around in our country, by givers and takers, ever achieve its goal? Should not the Governments of this country, of whatever colour or complexion they be, in the interests of the welfare of the state which they are believed to govern, step in to vitalise *pañcasīla* in practice?

All they need to do is to begin by inculcating, both at private and public levels, a better respect for all forms of life, including those of animals. The saner and more civilised world from Australia to the USA are all already ahead of us in this move. Their wealth of eloquent literature, in books of varying sizes, like *Diet For A Small Planet*, *Beyond Beef*, *Save Animals*, *Animal Liberation*, *Compassion - the Ultimate Ethic*, by a vast range of brilliant men and women, speak enough for this new thinking in the world.

Let us at this stage of deliberation indicate to the world that we in Sri Lanka have been well reminded more than twenty-three centuries ago of the worth of this first precept of the *pañcasīla* by showing respect to all forms of life, including those whom we have, through diverse religious sanctions, arrogantly chosen to label as part of our daily food. Think twice and think sensibly and try to re-live your life. It is not a day too early.

Continuing our dhamma studies on the errors of judgement and incorrect behaviour we have already discovered that a Buddhist *upāsaka* or lay devotee errs in his religious life through his deficiency or total absence of religious trust [or *saddhā*] in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha [*assaddho hoti*].

The second blameable trait of incorrect behaviour is his lack of moral goodness [*dussīlo*]. It is unmistakably asserted all the time that a true Buddhist must commence his religious life grounded on moral goodness [*sīle patitthāya naro sapañño*]. It is this alone in his religion which qualifies a Buddhist to begin treading the path to total spiritual liberation in Nirvana.

This Buddhist path of moral goodness, particularly at its basic primary level of *pañcasīla*, undoubtedly has an obvious universal applicability to all mankind,

everywhere, on account of its down-to-earth realistic considerations. We wish that all religions would share with us this spirit. But it seems to remain no more than a wish. Labels which separate mankind on the basis of religion, and mind you as fantastic market place sub-divisions, are daily appearing on the scene in more and more blinding colours. Quite apart from historical origins of religions, today they are beginning to show in their practices some vital differences, perhaps owing to religious sanctions they have opted to take upon themselves for diverse reasons.

This primarily relates to the position of humans in relation to all other forms of life in the universe, large and small. With a theory of creation, most religions which uphold this theory have been driven to believe that humans being the supreme product of creation, all else have been created for their use or consumption in some form or another. This comes into direct conflict with the first precept of the *pañcasīla*, namely respect for all forms of life [*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*]. Killing here may pertain to animals for food and for other experimental purposes like medical and pharmaceutical research.

In the wake of some forms of religious thinking, there is also the much larger killing of humans who are branded as hostile in terms of fanciful religious and communal groupings, for all of which religious groups of today grant religious sanction. In the light of these, it makes very little sense for those who make themselves heard over the media, the Radio and the Television, to say that all religious groups in Sri Lanka sponsor the *pañcasīla* move. We wish they did. To work for a common cause, we need to know our differences and the why of it as well.

This is an open challenge to the very first Buddhist precept of the *pañcasīla*, namely *pāṇātipātā-veramaṇī*. Mankind world over, apart from religious loyalties, are now sensibly changing over to the right of animals to live. Australia, England, America have very large numbers of converts into this new area of saner thinking, unmindful of their religious creeds. And are even seeking religious

approval for it. Neither for food nor for luxury items of furs and leather goods would they have their dumb friends slaughtered. We wish all religious groups, in the name of what we meaningfully call religion, would show as much sensitivity to this concept, believing that

He prayeth best that loveth best

All things both great and small.

As for the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, and those who champion their cause, both monk and layman, the best they can do is to begin at least with a token expression of their respect for all forms of life. The law of the land, known to everybody to be lamentably dilapidated today, is expected to safeguard the security of at least human life. It is now being justifiably doubted whether it does at all.

When it comes to animals, let it be remembered that their rearing and killing is artfully manipulated in the world today, more in the interest of the few who earn the money thereby than those who are fattened and cheered by the meat supplied. It is even never reckoned with that the medical bills for the ill effects of consuming animal foods is always paid by the consumer. Never by those at the super markets who are your regular suppliers of well-dressed, well-packed meats.

Why not sensitise the Buddhists of their four *poya* days in the month and make them observe them as meat-free vegetarian days. Begin by making it a steadfast weekly practice within the family. It will make the heads and hearts of at least a few better than what they are at the moment. As it did happen in the pioneering days of the introduction of Buddhism to this country, the sponsorship must come from the leaders in the state, from at least a few honest leaders, men and women among them, as well as from the major segment in religion, the clergy, including those escalated to the position of aspiring Buddhas, through the worshipful piety of lay devotees.

The reverential observance of this first precept of respect for life, starting at least in gradual instalments, via the Buddhist families, has to be a major breakthrough in Buddhist Sri Lanka. We do not need the unity or the unanimity of the divided saṅgha of Sri Lanka, divided no matter on whatever fantastic basis they be, to work towards this goal. What we need is a consensus of healthy religious opinion among the saner humans, men, women and children in our midst. Why not the Sri Lankans lead the way?

The underlying ethic of this is the convinced awareness of self esteem. In the Kosala Samyutta, the Buddha clarifies this to the king of Kosala [*Evaṃ piyo puthu attā paresaṃ tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ atta-kāmo*. SN. I. 75]. If you know that you love yourself, and that your own self is dear to you, no sensible person could deny this to the other, man or animal. Beware. It is weaknesses of the world like greed and pride, generated and nurtured via arrogant religious misdirection, which change the colour of our lenses and give us distorted images of the world and its contents.

Twenty-five centuries before the U.N. even sensed the need to safeguard the justifiably earned possessions of people under its Fundamental Human Rights, Buddhism warns against the injustice of dispossessing persons of their harmlessly acquired property [*adinnā-dānā veramaṇī*]. This ethic of respect for the possessions of others, in peace or in war, again swings back and centres on the concept of human dignity. Man of the world shall suffer no indignity of being looked upon as high or low, superior or inferior, in the partisan process of a preferential creation, and be at the receiving end of poverty and discrimination against on account of being on the other side of the line, poverty and penury as against affluence and abundance?

Here again, Buddhism firmly lays down that both the state law [*daṇḍa*] and sound and sensible public opinion [*ananuvajja*] shall deter such violent and shameful acts of dispossession. Do not fail to take serious note that these Buddhist injunctions [contained within the *pañcasīla*] are basics in the moral



goodness or *sīla* of the layman in Buddhism. It is much more an awareness and understanding of these social pre-requisites, and not an awe or fear of a divine authority or punishment in a life beyond the present, which provides smoothness to the perfect running of the social machinery. This has generated in many parts of the civilised world extremely wholesome and humanitarian concepts like neighbour-hood watch areas.

The third item in the *pañcasīla* listing insists on the refined and cultured attitude of the men in society towards their women, married or unmarried [*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*]. It is more than tragic and lamentable that many eminent writers on Buddhism, both of the east and the west, insist that this is no more than the Buddhist regulation of the attitude towards the gratification of sensual pleasures [*pañca-kāma*]. We insist that this is a fantastic misinterpretation. We could do no more than just say R.I.P. and kindly request that they, if they would have a chance in this life, re-read the relevant texts over again. The Buddhists, the world over, shall know where to dump their writings.

This propriety of sex relationships [*methuna-samācāra*], insisting on chastity and conjugal fidelity, applies equally well at all levels of pre-marital and extra-marital intimacies, through force or mutual consent [*sahasā sampiyena vā* at Sn. v.123]. We are of the opinion that victims of incidents of STD and AIDS towards whom we are justifiably asked to show sympathy and compassion have unfortunately missed the sober and saner instructions with regard to the permissible gratification of sex desires. Let it be known that the forewarned are forearmed and the tragic disasters for which world wide sympathy is invoked could be averted.

Honesty in word and deed, in all social transactions, is envisaged under the fourth precept [*musāvādā veramaṇī*]. Reliability and transparency in action are all parts of this fundamental virtue of honesty. Finally comes abstinence from the use of alcoholic drinks and drugs which impairs the soundness of judgement of humans, of men, women and children of all climes and all times [*api nu kho*

*bhikkhave taṃ pātabbaṃ yaṃ pivitvā visaññī assa*. See Pācittiya Pāḷi 6.6.1 at BJTS Vol. II (1) p. 300]. It is to be noted that what comes under scrutiny of this precept here are not only intoxicating drinks. It also covers whatever else that bring intoxication. The word *pāna* which comes from the verb *pibati* [= drinks] is also used with smoking as in *dhūma pāna*. Also note *duṃ bīma* in Sinhala. Hence this precept undoubtedly covers both alcoholic drinks and intake of drugs.

We have so far highlighted the degeneracy of human life, brought about through the breakdown of moral goodness or *sīla* in the world, caused often on account of self-assumed arrogance on the one hand and pitifully massive ignorance of the basic values about life on the other. These, in all cases, are serious blunders in our living style in society. It is little realised that this decadence tears apart the smoothness of the social fabric in the human community.

The dhamma warnings about errors in human behaviour which we have picked up for discussion from the Anguttara Nikaya now highlight two further areas of erratic vision of humans with regard to what they believe and look upon to be auspicious or luck-bringing to mankind. This is the ancient Indian concept of *maṅgala*. The basis of this seems to be no more than mystic and magical and we are compelled to conclude that these items are dredged from a not very complimentary world of make-believe.

Situations which are manipulated and are strategically contrived according to preconceived patterns, like meeting a young damsel with flowers or a vessel of water in her hand as one steps out to go on an important journey, are believed to bring good luck. Similarly bad omens like the sight of a widow or a beggar are believed to bring bad luck. Such beliefs in sights and sounds are listed as *kotūhala-maṅgala*. They are of two specific types: visual or *dittha-maṅgala* and audio or *suta-maṅgala*. A believer in such items or a *kotūhala-maṅgaliko* is looked upon as a degenerate Buddhist. The Maṅgala Sutta is an acceptance of this challenge and offers a complete rebuttal of these superstitious beliefs in the

auspiciousness of what is seen and heard and speculated [*dit̥ṭṭha-maṅgala suta-maṅgala muta-maṅgala*].

Such a person relies solely on the benefits of such superstitious or magically contrived situations and not on productive action of his own initiative. He is described as being *maṅgalaṃ pacceṭi no kammaṃ*. These two items are specifically listed as being severely corrosive on the religiousness of a Buddhist, making him a *upāsaka-caṇḍāla*, i.e. an outcast, an alien in Buddhism.

Finally in the list of menacing situations which lead to the shattering and disintegration of the religiousness of a Buddhist is his being stealthily dragged and roped into the religious arenas of completely alien other religious creeds which are basically polarised in their religious beliefs. Not very different to the concept of free love in married life in the world today, or to the world wide enjoyment of extra-marital sex everywhere, it is noticeable that Buddhists of Sri Lanka too are very openly wooing divinities of completely different faiths, lured by many attractions. Outside their own creed of Buddhism, they look out for personalities, divine or human, whom they could honour and pay obeisance to and make offerings thereunto [*ito bahiddhā dakkhiṇeyyaṃ gavesati tattha ca pubbakāraṃ karoti*].

They are seen to be vociferously disclaiming any pressure or persuasion from the enticing sectors. They endeavour to make out that they work on their own convictions. They also triumphantly claim, on the other hand, that it is the discovery of glamour and grandeur elsewhere which they have not been able to see in Buddhism. Thank you for your opinion, we say. More evidently it is the possibility of divinely granted material gains which they cannot claim while being within the fold of Buddhism. With these people, the telescope is undeniably on the blind eye. They see not what they should. In terms of true Buddhist teachings, these people shall gather their harvests according to what they sow [*Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ*]. Doers of good shall gather a harvest that is wholesome [*kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ*], and the evil doers, one that is

evil [*pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ*].

Our endeavour in this essay has been to safeguard the religious edifice of the Buddhist. To show him the bed rock on which to securely lay his multi-dimensional religious foundation. This is for a long range trans-samsāric happiness and not for an extra ration of bread and butter for domestic consumption. Let it be remembered that having shattered your religious citadel with the inroads of unauthorised demolition squads on your own invitation, it is you who have to find your own builders from elsewhere through your own seeking, to re-build what you have torn down on your own choice.

## Lesson 10

### Big Blunders in Dhamma Interpretation in Sri Lanka

In the hands of writers on Buddhism in the English language, both as translators of Pali texts and as interpreters of the dhamma, we have witnessed during the last one hundred years or so a reasonably large number of substantially questionable errors. In the hands of translators, they have been for the most part *bona fide* mistakes, arising out of an inadequacy of knowledge of the language they were handling. In spite of these, we are deeply indebted and ever grateful to those pioneers for the invaluable service they have rendered to the cause Buddhist studies.

In the hands of interpreters, the errors, for the most part, were the result of misunderstanding the strange patterns of thinking of the eastern world to which they were unfortunately aliens and strangers. We are prepared to treat them with sympathetic understanding. We have also adequate reason to believe that some of these errors are also due to a sense of arrogance, arising out of a feeling of intellectual superiority in terms of their religious and philosophic thinking.

In the last three or four decades, i.e. after the World War II, there has been an unimaginable upsurge of Buddhist writing in Sri Lanka, a very wide range of both monks and laymen writing, both in Sinhala and English. They do so on a still wider range of themes connected with Buddhism. They sweep over a vast territory of Buddhist thought and activity like Vipassanā meditation, our unseen world, Bodhi Pūjā, Antarā Bhava, Psychotherapy and Hypnosis. It is very obvious that writers in Sri Lanka come from an un-chartered field with regard to their competence and credibility.

In this area of activity, nobody in the governmental, religious or academic sectors in this country ever feel the need for a bureau of standards to determine the correctness or otherwise of what is said about Buddhism or what is being passed off as Buddhism. In this country, we have pleaded over the decades for

this. The Buddha in his death bed set up such an institution, telling his disciples about the claims of each one of them to authority regarding what they say. It is best our Sri Lankan monks and the lay community come to learn about these *Mahāpadesā* in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta [DN.II.124]. The Buddha insisted that what is being said about Buddhism must be tested against the authentic word of the Buddha, i.e. the Dhamma and the Vinaya: *Sutte otāretabbāni Vinaye sandassetabbāni* [Ibid.].

Now our Buddha Gotama, in meeting his physical death at the age of eighty years, and slipping over to what is called his *parinibbāna* [and in that process definitely not reaching anything spiritually higher than at thirty-five] has been dead for more than two thousand five hundred years. And everybody in this country has taken the freedom, we do not need to say whose freedom or from whom, to be able to say and pass off what they like as the word of the Buddha. People at the top, perhaps perched on roof tops or may even be on bamboo poles, are said to be heard saying that Nirvana as the religious goal in Buddhism is to be reached emotionally, via human emotions and not intellectually. In another area, yet some other pundits are known to be saying that those who are observing the eight precepts during their *uposatha* for less than half a day are observing some *sīla*, after all. Being honest to ourselves we would say that forms of fraud that are being practised in the market place are much less than this.

The main purpose of writing this article today is to bring to light what we would consider to be a devastating howler appearing in one of the latest [2005] publications of the Buddhist Publications Society - BPS of Kandy. The book is entitled Walking the Tight Rope. The author claims to be a Canadian named David Young. This is how he presents a segment of Buddhism on p. 82 . He tells us that this is the version he had from Ven. Pemasiri of Kanduboda whom he presents as a distinguished meditation master.

"The third type of action we need to abstain from is sensual misconduct. The Pali expression for abstaining from sensual misconduct is *kāmesu micchā-cārā*.

*Kamesu* means craving for objects of pleasure. The word, *kamesu*, is not in the singular form, but the plural form, which means abstinence from sensual misconduct is not only abstinence from one form of sensual misconduct. Abstaining from sensual misconduct does not only mean abstaining from physical sexual misconduct. No. Abstaining from sensual misconduct also means abstaining from abusing any one of the sense doors. For example, if you use your tape recorder to listen to something inappropriate, that is also an abuse of a sense door, your ear, and falls within sensual misconduct. Or perhaps you decide to get drunk, which is an abuse of your tongue, another sense door. Using any sense door inappropriately is sensual misconduct. But today, most people only refer to sexual misconduct."

Just one moment. This looks like what most sophisticated Sri Lankan men and women today, of both the country and the town, call 'a lovely sermon'. We clearly show below how Buddhist doctrines have to be studied and put into practice in our daily lives, not merely on their external gloss and glamour, but with an awareness of the religio-cultural milieu in which they have had their origin. *Kāmesu micchā-cārā* of the *pañca-sīla* is one specific instance like that. It has a vital role to play regarding the safety, security and honour of the woman in Indian society, about which even some higher grade Sri Lankan sociologists nurtured in the west, to our utter dismay, are in doubt. This is in addition to safeguarding the moral tone of the men and women in our human community. Ignoring the religious context, it is unwise for monks or laymen, no matter from which part of the world they come, to wax eloquent on petty issues like grammatical forms of words as being singular or plural. Here are a few more lines from the page we are quoting.

"Suppose you are a married man and there is another woman who wants to have sex with you, and you want to have sex with her. If you indulge yourself with this other woman and your wife disapproves, your actions are considered an abuse of the senses. If, however, your wife approves of you having sex with the

other woman, doing so is not considered an abuse of the senses. You can go and have sex with the other woman. That is the way. There has to be consensual agreement between the husband and the wife that having an extra-marital affair is permissible. There has to be mutual agreement between both partners."

We would directly and pointedly say that this, no matter who delivers or who interprets this message, as monk or layman, is a gross misunderstanding, and worse, a menacing misrepresentation, verging on vulgarity, of the third precept of the *pañcasīla* which reads as *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ*. When viewed in the light of Theravada Buddhist culture and social ethics as laid down in Buddhist teachings, and which we Sri Lankans have inherited, this line of suggested behaviour of sinful connivance within the family circuit, and this insinuation about what is no less than a veiled adulterous crime, appear extremely repulsive and needs to be dreaded and avoided like the Aids virus.

One more word about this prize-winning sentence of the book.

"There has to be consensual agreement between the husband and the wife that having an extra-marital affair is permissible."

About this consensual agreement proposed in the book, whether between the husband and the wife, or between the despicable miscreant individuals, the Buddhist teachings have nothing but forthright condemnation. See below the statement from the Vasala Sutta in the Suttanipata.

*Yo ñatīnaṃ sakhānam vā dāresu patidissati  
sahasā sampiyena vā taṃ jaññā vasalo iti.*

Sn. v. 123

"He who trespasses on the wives of his friends or relatives, either with connivance or use of force, one should look upon him as an outcast or *pariah*."

Translated by the author



The total disregard for these Buddhist views reflected in the above statements clearly indicate either a blissful ignorance as to what Buddhism teaches on this subject of *kāmesu micchācārā* or a vicious intent to distort them.

Authentic Buddhist texts in Pali present to us this subject of *pañca-sīla* in very many places. The identity of each item of these can be easily established by placing these different texts side by side. Here are verses 246 & 247 of the Dhammapada which place the *pañcasīla* in a very vibrant context which no sensible preacher of the dhamma or a listener to it can afford to miss. It is time for some of us in both groups, both monks as well as lay persons, to compulsorily get back to our Montessori Dhamma schools. It is also time for some of our top ranking Sangha leaders in Sri Lanka, no matter of what division, to establish a few. Read carefully the Pali texts we give below.

*Yo pāṇam atipātetī musāvādañca bhāsati  
loke adinnam ādiyati paradārañca gacchati  
surāmerayapānañca yo naro anuyuñjati  
idh'eva eso lokasmim mūlaṃ khaṇati attano.*

Dhp. vv. 246&247

The first three lines of the above verses quoted from the Dhammapada are found recurring in the Anguttara Nikaya [at AN. III. 205 f.], with three different lines added to them, stressing that whosoever is guilty of any breaches of these five items of *pañcasīla*, not only turns out to be a villain, i.e. *dussīlo* in this very life, but is destined to be born in purgatory or *Niraya* where he has to pay [paṭisamvedeti] for the evil he has done. Here too, in the listing of the items of *pañcasīla*, any one with an iota of Buddhist sense in his head cannot fail to see that *paradārañca gacchati* steps in to take the place of *kāmesu micchācārā* without any ambiguity. In fact these verses quoted below proclaim the rewards of safeguarding the five precepts as praise in this life and a blissful birth in the life after. We quote here the Anguttara.

*Yo pāṇam atipāṭeti musāvādañca bhāsati  
 loke adinnam ādiyati paradārañca gacchati  
 surāmerayapānañca yo naro anuyuñjati  
 appahāya pañcaverāni dussīlo iti vuccati  
 kāyassa bhedaḍḍappañño nirayaṃ ao upapajjati.*

.....

*pahāya pañcaverāni sīlavā iti vuccati  
 kāyassa bhedaḍḍappañño sugatiṃ so upapajjati.*

AN.III. 205f.

Any layman, leave alone the monk, will detect with ease that *paradārañca gacchatī* [i.e. approaching sexually the spouse of another] of the Dhammapada and the Anguttara identifies itself with the regular *pañcasīla* reading *kāmesu micchācārā*. He should do it with far greater ease than a toddler with a Jigsaw. We will now take you to the Dhammika Sutta of the Suttanipata.

*Abrahmacariyam parivajjayeyya  
 aṅgārakāsuṃ jalitaṃ va viññū  
 asambhunanto pana brahmacariyaṃ  
 parassa dāraṃ nātikkameyya.*

Sn. v. 396

Here again, one can easily pick up *parassa dāraṃ nātikkameyya* which means 'trespass not on another's spouse' as readily identifiable with *kāmesu micchācārā* as the 3<sup>rd</sup> precept of the *pañcasīla*. This is enough for the present.

We do not need to and we do not propose to labour any further, writing commentaries on this blatant and scandalous howler, no matter who is held answerable for it. This 3<sup>rd</sup> precept of the *pañcasīla* refers to nothing other than impropriety and indecency in sexual behaviour or sexual misconduct. Commentators of the succeeding generation always referred to it as *methuna-*

*samācāra* or sexual intercourse. It is not easy, we concede, for aliens of a different religious or cultural ethos to easily understand or appreciate the depth of this Buddhist value judgement of conjugal fidelity. We know what it is like in the world today. Who is promoting what and where? Let us leave them alone. But what is going haywire here with our locals, in our own land, both monks and lay persons, we ask? In whose hands is our knowledge of the dhamma? In whose hands is our culture?

In 1921, the Sacred Books of the Buddhists, under the editorship of T.W. Rhys Davids understandably mistranslated this concept [*kamesu miccha na caritabba* at DN. III. 63] as 'Ye shall not act wrongly touching bodily desires.' In 1957, the Pali Text Society republished the same, without any change, without anybody anywhere, from the religious or academic communities, having prompted a correction. However, we are glad to publicise with admiration that Maurice Walshe, in 1987 has correctly translated this phrase as 'Do not commit sexual misconduct' on page 398 in his translation of the Digha Nikaya [Thus Have I Heard by Maurice Walshe. Wisdom Publications. London. 1987].

The first outpouring of this blunder, clearly presented in black and white was, as far as we recollect, in Buddhist Ethics by Venerable Hammelewa Saddhatissa. Allen and Unwin, London. 1970. This is his presentation on page 106.

"We now return to the interpretation of the precept as with *kama* in the Locative plural form *kāmesu*. In such form the precept signifies abstinence from all indulgences in the five sensuous objects, namely visible object, sound or audible object, olfactory object, sap or gustative object, and body impression or tactile object. *Kāmesu micchācārā* is therefore 'wrong or evil conduct with regard to the five sensual organs'. In many places in Pali literature, the fifth factor of *kāma*, that is body impression, has been interpreted as 'unlawful sexual intercourse'; it seems that it would be the most blameworthy of the five *kāmas*. In representing *kāmesu micchācārā* as relating only to sexual intercourse the grammatical form of *kāma* has been ignored; to achieve complete observance of

the precept, one must therefore desist from the five forms of self indulgence, both directly and indirectly."

Who misleads whom, generation after generation?

In countless articles to local news papers and numerous broadcasts and telecasts over the media, we have, time and again, endeavoured to correct this pet and profitable howler of the Sri Lankans. It does provide, we understand, adequate cover to some. Are we gleefully awaiting the arrival of Buddha Maitreya to make the necessary correction?

In fairness to the teachings of the Buddha, we are compelled to request that the BPS, as the publishers of this scandalous howler, produce a correction note with an apology and mail it, without fail, to all recipients of this book in their mailing list. We hope this article would pave the way for it. You shall reap as you sow.

## Section Three - Society

### Lesson 11

#### The Human Resource as viewed from the Buddhist religio-cultural angle

More than ever before, it has now become vital that policy makers at all levels, anywhere and everywhere, become sensitive to the need of value judgements. It is then and only then that they can, with a fair measure of conviction, face the consequences of their decisions and hold themselves responsible for what they do. We often undertake to do many things, but often with very little qualitative assessment of what we are doing and with even less thought as for whose benefit we work.

With these prefatory remarks let us now begin talking about our subject. It must be stated in no uncertain terms at the very outset that a major theme in Buddhist social philosophy is the successful harnessing of the manpower resources of a country. One must carefully examine the target which the Buddhists mean to achieve thereby and the methods they propose to adopt to make such a venture a success.

Now that we are assembled here to analyze, assess and administer manpower resources available to us, I should first explain the Buddhist concept of man as a prelude to our discussion. Man is said to be man, according to Buddhism, because of his mental accomplishment: *manassa ussannatāya manussā*. [VvA. 18 & KhpA. 123]. The Pali word *mana* means mind and *ussannatā* means the lofty heights it has reached. Let us examine this a little further. Man, unlike the animal, does not move on in life through built in responses.

Man is gifted with the capacity to make decisions, adjust himself to new situations, be sensitive not only to his own feelings but also to those of others, make concessions and sacrifices on what are carefully judged by him to be valid considerations. Man, according to Buddhism, is such a functionally effective and efficient unit in the social machinery of the human community. According to Buddhism, he is not subordinated to a higher will above himself. What he does is not dictated by a higher authority above and beyond humanity [*attāṇo loko anabhissaro* in the Raṭṭhpāla Sutta at MN.II.68]. He works on a basically horizontal, humanistic value system which invariably forms also the basis of his transcendental aspirations.

It must also be noted here that Buddhists look upon the life of man on this earth here as a single phase of a continuous process which has links with a past and a future through time and space. Each individual is viewed as a self-propelled unit with a distinctness of personality and character. Viewed from any angle, man is a product of his psycho-physical activity of body and mind which is precisely referred to as the conjoint activity of *nāmarūpa* and *viññāṇa*. They are inter-dependent causally-connected factors or *aññamañña-paccaya* as we are constantly reminded by the statement *nāmarūpa-paccayā viññāṇaṃ viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpaṃ*. [SN. II.114]. The two together makes human life possible. It is also this mind-body activity which contributes to the ceaseless flow of life through *Samṣāra*. The word *nāmarūpa* is at times also singly used to refer to the total human personality of body and mind [*Sabbaso nāmarūpasmim yassa natthi mamāyitaṃ* at Sn. v. 950 and *Sabbaso nāmarūpasmim vītagedhassa Brāhmaṇa* at Sn. v. 1100].

According to correct Buddhist thinking a man of the world is a complete unit of activity with a total personal responsibility with regard to his life in the world in which he presently lives. This has both individual and social dimensions. Viewing it from the angle of what we would call the higher transcendental aspirations, Buddhism considers man's moral goodness, i.e. the wholesomeness of his down

to earth man-to-man relationship to be of vital importance even for the initial build up of religious excellence. This is what Buddhism refers to as *sīla*. This is said to be the foundation for the construction of the three-tiered edifice of religion. Buddhism calls this construction process *sikkhā*. In this three tiered edifice, *sīla* is the very first one. The construction process is strictly declared to be a gradual one which is undertaken in successive stages. Thus it becomes clear that in Buddhism, life and religion do not stand apart. They are organic parts which contribute to create a fruitful whole.

Therefore with this down-to-earth empiricist approach, a Buddhist has to start his religious life with his basic experience of day to day life. One has to start with what is known and near and make that the basis for everything that is beyond and is hoped for. It is in this sense that we would make bold to say that the road to Nirvana runs through the highways of society. Here one cannot fail to respect the position that the social philosophy of Buddhism prepares the ground-plan for its religious super structure. It is equally true that a Buddhist cannot expect to reach his religious goal without a sound social philosophy.

Now let me start with the first proposition of Buddhist social philosophy, namely the *pañcasīla* or the Code of Five Moral Precepts. It is not unusual to hear occasional rumblings from our midst, from all manner of people, about the difficulty of observing these simple basic injunctions which are rooted in an awareness of fundamental human rights. A clear and unconfused knowledge of basic Buddhist teachings would reveal to any one the intense degree of social concern and social relevance they embody. They uphold a person's right for the safety and security of his life and a person's right over his possessions. Today these are universally acclaimed human rights. Here I wish to draw your attention to the UN charter on Fundamental Human Rights. They do not demand anybody's leanings to any particular religious faith or to any particular political creed. They can very well be practiced and upheld globally without any thoughts of religious conversion.

This universality is further attested in Buddhist texts where the *pañcasīla* becomes the basic admonition of the Universal Monarch or *Rājā Cakkavatti* who, legendarily though, by his being an embodiment of all virtues of ideal governance [*dhammiko dhammarājā*], comes to be accepted by the whole world as their one and only ruler. The ruler, in turn, tells the people that his major concern is that the world should respect the moral order, and that he does not interfere with the basic rights of people. As long as the moral order is maintained in a manner that serves mankind, it is not the intention of the *Cakkavatti* to interfere with the political structure of any country. In any country where Buddhism has contributed to the formation of the cultural milieu, one has to take serious notice of the above remarks about the insistence on the moral order before attempting to examine or analyze the socio-economic problems of that country.

I shall now introduce to you in brief some of the authentic Buddhist texts which deal with the subject of manpower resources directly and precisely in terms of social requirements.

Kūṭadanta Sutta of the Digha Nikaya [DN.I.135f.] handles this at the state level on the basis of professional skills as well as personal aptitude and temperament, with a view to ensuring maximum utilization of manpower resources. Strict adherence to casting the right type in the right place is recommended. Further it is also recognized that there should be adequate stimuli and inspiration from the employer for the maximum output of work from the employee. Satisfactory provision of food at work place, adequate remuneration for the work done and further aids like health care and medical attention for the successful pursuance of the employment undertaken are among the interesting issues dealt with in the above quoted sutta. On the other hand, the Sigāla Sutta [DN.III.p.188f.] deals with this issue of utilization of manpower resources in the community from the domestic angle, i.e. at the familial level.

The main theme there is the respectful recognition of the services rendered, and in this case, particularly to the family as a unit. The relationships discussed



there imply familial, extra-familial and inter-familial considerations. While the family is recognized as the basic unit of social operation, the satisfactory administration of the family appears to have also regarded as important the services rendered by many others from different areas of service like the teacher [*ācariya*] who contributes to the education of the children in the home and the religious men [*samaṇabrāhmaṇa*] who provide the moral and spiritual leadership to the entire family while standing, as it were, outside the pale of the family. [DN. III.188 f.]

In the Sigāla Sutta, further to this recognition of the services rendered, there are virtually detailed codes of conduct which determine the relationship in which one party stands to the other. The relationship is respectfully reciprocal and does not make one subservient to another. As in the Kūṭadanta Sutta, in the Sigāla Sutta too, stimulative measures are further recommended, thus building up a healthy morale within the work-community, not only in those directly employed but also in those connected with the workmen in diverse relationships such as a workman's spouse and offspring.

By now it should be clear to us that a point which is reiterated in Buddhist teachings is that man must hold man in complete respect, that being the very spirit of the concept of *mettā* or *maitrī*, i.e. unbounded love or loving kindness, resulting from genuine friendliness or absence of hostility. It also implies that no one should do anything that jeopardizes the interests of the other [... *parabyābādhāya samvatteyya* at MN. I. 416: Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta], and that he must not deprive another of what legitimately belongs to him [... *parassa paravittūpakaraṇam* ... MN. I. 257]. For it is indicated that a man's possessions form the basis of his happiness [*Paravittūpakaraṇan'ti tass'eva parassa vittūpakaraṇam tuṭṭhijananam parikkhāra-bhaṇḍakam*. MA.II. 329 in the Commentary to the Sāleyyaka Sutta at MN. I. 285 f.].

Let me now elaborate for your benefit some of the theses formulated by the Buddhists on this issue. Utilization of manpower resources immediately implies

employment of some sort, either by an employer or as self-employment. An employer comes in two categories, either as state or private sector. Leaving self-employment to be organized and stabilized through self-regulation, the question of employer- employee relationships where two groups or individuals are involved are thoroughly dealt with in these Buddhist sources. They had several major reasons for taking upon themselves this task. A well-regulated system of human relationships was deemed necessary at all levels for social harmony, peace and prosperity. On the side of economic development where greater productivity resulting from efficient administration of work was necessary, it was vital that every unit of the working community was smoothly integrated.

This, it was realized on the other hand, was possible only where people derived the maximum or at least the optimum happiness in life that they choose to enjoy. This is what makes them happy and comfortable. Buddhist texts use two valuable words in these contexts, namely *sukheti* - comforts and *pīṇeti* - pleases or satisfies. As we now examine the Buddhist stand with regard to employer-employee relationships we will discover how much these two concepts loom large in the minds of those who formulated the policies. The policies as laid down in the Kūṭadanta Sutta quoted above embrace three major areas.

- i. Job-satisfaction for the employee and the maximum utilization of skills and aptitudes from the point of view of the employer.
- ii. Adequate remuneration for work done and recognition of service rendered.
- iii. Sensitivity to the physical and emotional needs of the employee.

Under the consideration of job satisfaction, the Kūṭadanta Sutta which envisages the State as the employer notes that people should be employed according to competence and aptitude. Several avenues of employment like agriculture, trade, public administration are mentioned and the assignment and appointment is to be according to each one's choice, literally in the avenue in

which they persevere or are competent in: *ussahati*. Contentment among the employees and consequent productivity in the work sector is envisaged. As further stimuli to this, it is suggested that all workmen [excepting those engaged in trade in this context] are to be provided with meals daily [*devasikaṃ bhattaṃ*] at their work place, in addition to their regular monthly wages [*māsikaṃ paribbayaṃ*].

This was a must and had to be arranged to suit the workers' convenience. It had to be more than a mere frugal meal. Special meals or delicacies had to be even occasionally introduced. Literary evidence shows that this was no mere injunction confined to the theoretical tradition of the books. In the Mahāvamsa [Ch.50 vv.18-21], it is stated that during the construction of the Mahāthūpa at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, i.e. Ruvanvelisaya, King Duṭu Gemunu [101 - 77 B.C.] provided four canteens at the four gates for the benefit of the workmen which carried in their stocks, in addition to items of food and drink, 'many garments, different ornaments, fragrant flowers, sugar as well as the five perfumes for the mouth.' Mark well the King's wish, while providing these facilities.

'Let them take of these as they will when they have labored as they will.' Observing this command, the King's work-people allotted [the wages].

Quite unwittingly, while commenting on Duṭu Gemunu's policy, we have now come to the second point indicated above, viz. adequate remuneration or wages. Before proceeding further, let me stress here again that the provision of food for workmen is in addition to the regular wages. The word used is *bhatta-vetana* [*bhatta* = food and *vetana* = wages].

This is the sense in which it is used in the early Buddhist texts, in the historical tradition associated with Duṭu Gemunu [B.C. 101-77] and in the Commentaries of Venerable Buddhaghosa. But it is unfortunate that the intellectual giants of Sri Lanka of more recent years have slipped off their cultural

pedestals and interpreted this as wages or payment made for food [See *bat vaṭup* in the Sri Sumangala Sabda Koṣaya by Ven. W. Sorata which explains it as *bataṭa avaśya paḍiya* = wages or payment needed for food. Vo. II. p. 634]. This tends to take away from the mind of the employer his obligation to provide food for his workmen and from the employee the basis for a legitimate demand which was supported by the cultural tradition of the land. What a national calamity and what a breach in the growth of a healthy socialist outlook.

Let us now proceed to examine our last item on the list, i.e. the employer's sensitivity to the physical and emotional needs of the employee. It is indicated as a first requirement that work should be allocated judging the physical fitness and capacity of the workmen, lighter work for women and junior workers. Medical care in case of illness is specifically mentioned. On the emotional side, several specific items mentioned reveal the need on the part of the employer to win the good will of his employees. Luxury items of food like delicacies are to be offered to workmen from time to time. Provision is also to be made to make gifts of clothing and ornaments, during festival seasons, in addition to the bonuses paid regularly on this account.

Thus a vast fund of good will is being built which not only sustains without any interruption the ventures undertaken by the employer, State or otherwise, but also nurtures such a vital spirit of comradeship between the two groups, completely eliminating noisy slogans about exploitation. Special mention is made in Buddhist texts which deal with the just uses of wealth of the contribution an employer makes to elevate the quality of life of his workmen and to give them the optimum happiness they expect as an integral part of decent living. [*sukhenti piṇenti*] in recognition of the service they have rendered to him in the production of his wealth. The Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 77 and also at Ibid 45]. in a very comprehensive survey of money and its meaningful use, mentions both those employed at domestic level [*dāsakammakāra-porisā*] as well as those in larger agricultural and industrial concerns [*khetta-kammanta-sāmanta-samvohārā*].

Finally, one glance at the Sigāla Sutta. This is essentially a code of layman's ethics for social harmony, domestic happiness and economic well-being. The heights of culture to which it can elevate a man of any society has to be adequately appreciated. It speaks in no uncertain terms about regulated hours of work [*samaye vossaggena*] and daily provision of food for workmen in addition to regular monthly payment of wages [*bhatta-vetana-anuppadānena*. All at DN. III. 191. See also Dialogues of the Buddha - Rhys Davids III. 182]. This sutta which calls upon the householder to put the house in order under one family unit, extends this process of regularization linking one family with another, thus having no single individual in the community who is not related to the entire community in some definite wholesome way. Through this process every one is respected, generously and genuinely, for the service rendered in the interest of the human community. It is for this reason that the sutta is called the Salutation to all Directions: *disā namassana*.

Thus in the teachings of the Buddha, delivered to the world more than two and a half millennia ago, one discovers a wealth of information which can be utilized to guide the destinies of man, for cultured and peaceful living, without any foreign aid as gold and silver from near or far, through a sheer policy of human magnanimity and humanitarian considerations evolved through honesty and love.

## Lesson 12

### Work - A Socio-Economic Analysis with a relevant religious [Buddhist] backdrop

Work has to be undertaken and carried out for several obvious reasons. In the world, work pertains to the area of man, and today to the area of machines as well. Machines work under the direction of man but soon robots will get ahead of him and perhaps, in the field of work, give meaningful directions to him. In relation to animals, man will continue to maintain his lead. Animals act and do things by way of built-in reflexes. Their survival is guaranteed by such behaviour. In hunger and thirst, in fear and anger, animals react on this basis. Man who has, more or less, the exclusive possession of reason decides as to the [propriety of] time and manner of action. Buddhist teachings attribute this to the higher grade of development of his brain, at the higher level of primates, well above reptilian and mammalian. Buddhist texts explain the word *manussa*, the equivalent for man, as *Manassa ussannatāya manussā* [VvA. 18 & KhpA. 123]. Humans are called *manussa* on account of their better developed brain or mind [= *mana/manasa*].

Therefore in human society, we discover men and women purposefully and meaningfully engaged in work. They are motivated to work for various reasons. There are personal individual reasons. There are also collective social reasons. The outcome of work gives joy in different ways. Work leads to the fulfilment of diverse expectations. Everyone discovers all the time defects and deficiencies in one's life and in the world one lives in. Life is discovered to be a continuous process of rectifying, correcting these shortfalls. In illness one takes measures to regain one's health. Healthy ones regularly keep grooming themselves, clipping and dressing their hair, exercising and massaging their limbs, sometimes even adding lustre and colour to their skin. These acts are not remunerative. One might be called upon to pay another for getting various services in these areas.

But in the process of doing these one earns no income. People still do them. One would therefore classify activities of this nature as non-remunerative or as work which is self-satisfying and self-gratifying.

Extending beyond this very personal range of activity, there also exists a range of work which serves the needs of family build-up. These like building places of residence, growing food for family needs, providing adequate means for family safety and security like putting up fences and walls around homes, are all musts of family life in human communities. With excessive modernisation, urbanisation and mechanisation, many people seem to lose sight of some of these unquestionably basic and vital needs. Too many people expect their larger controlling bodies like central governments or local municipalities to be responsible for these. This is what leads to the shameless and complete breakdown of municipal cleanliness, with heavily garbage-dumped lanes in pompous residential areas of metropolitan Colombo and other big cities.

But all these work contributions, it must be remembered, when they have a home-born domestic origin contribute immensely to the generation and production of that indispensable nutrient of family harmony which goes by the name of love. Or philanthropy, if the word love is too explosive today. Even if this kind of life style looks a going back to less developed socio-economic structures, they certainly are to be looked upon as contributing to far greater social integration and social solidarity than the industrialisation and mechanisation process which is rapidly gaining ground on us.

In a pre-war [World War II] Sri Lanka, even as far back as sixty seventy years ago, this kind of activity was undertaken at a joint inter-familial level. They were known to people in the villages under the name of *kayya* which literally meant in Sinhala 'a job of work to be done'. We recollect with joy how in a delightful participatory spirit, with a lot of food and drinks within reach, people of the then delightful country side, assembled almost at sunrise to launch such mutually beneficial projects in the village. Sometimes these extended from the inter-

familial to entire regional levels, embracing such activities like tree planting, cleaning up village tanks or even giving a face-lift to the village school. In Buddhist thinking, this kind of activity is looked upon as just or good living [*dhammatthā*]. The Samyutta Nikaya [SN. 1. 33] lists these activities as planting of fruit and shade trees [*ārāma-ropā vana-ropā*], building bridges [*setu-kārakā*], providing drinking-water on road sides [*papañ ca upānañ ca*]. In highly developed countries like Canada and the USA, even today, the protection and guarding of residential areas is organised on this basis of collective responsibility and magnanimous participation. The organisation of their Neighbourhood Watch Areas in their cities is a good example.

Let us now move into another area where work is attractive for a different reason. Work is remunerative. Work is also productive and brings in wealth in its wake. Money [*dhanā*] and wealth [*bhoga*] are great attractions in life. They provide comfort [*sukha*] and joy [*pīti*]. In terms of Buddhist analyses, work can be viewed as remunerative employment. This can be put under two broad categories of self-employment and employment under others. Working for others includes both the state and the private sector. We discover here that work and money are closely tied up. Money through work comes as either as wages or remuneration for work done or as productive income generated through what has been produced.

In all these areas, one could begin with the question 'What prompts people to work?' Each one in the human community has and feels an awareness of a civic responsibility one owes to the family or the community to which one belongs. [The sooner it is implanted in case of its absence, the better it is for the society in which such individuals are found.]. Every member of the human community, man or woman, has primarily to feel his personal identity. It is his or her parents and the values acquired through each religion which must sensitise them to this. It is our considered opinion that it is the lamentable failure in this area that leads to the staggering rise in suicides in this country, particularly in the



category of juveniles. The abominable crimes of incest and rape in this country, in recent years, must be traced back to such pathological states. Once a person knows his or her personal identity, such a person has always to be placed in his or her correct position in the home and society, in the correct slot in one's community, as it were. It must be as precisely fitted as part and the whole. Then he knows himself, his parents, his wife and children [if any], friends and relatives, and those who toil for him. These social relationships cannot be forgotten or violated. One who knows this also knows his obligations towards all these human components in whose midst he lives. The fulfilment of all these immediately raises the need for money. The Anguttara Nikaya, in a special chapter entitled Utilisation of Money or *bhogānaṃ ādiyā* [AN. III. 45] discusses in detail these different areas in which money is to be profitably utilised. We shall take them in due course.

In the first category of self-employment referred to above, one gets the money through production, as a result of energetic application to various areas of activity [*kammante payojeyya*] such as agriculture, animal husbandry or industry. It is even wisely suggested in authentic Buddhist texts that where one does not possess enough capital to start on any such venture, that one could get the necessary money on loan, with interest or *vaḍḍhi* [... *yaṃ pi bhikkhave daḷiddo assako anāliko iṇaṃ ādiyitvā vaḍḍhim paṭisunivā ... & ... vaḍḍhiṃ paṭisunivā kālābhatam vaḍḍhiṃ na deti ...* [both at AN. III. 352]. This idea of getting money on loan for useful and benevolent ventures, with interest is further explained as *iṇaṃ ādāyā 'ti vaḍḍhiyā dhanam gahetvā* at DA. I. 212] or interest free , and then proceed.

Whatever may be the mode of employment [self-employment or any other], it is emphatically indicated everywhere that earning money must be via righteous and justifiable means which is qualified with phrases like *dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi bhogehi* which is further qualified with *sedāvakkhhittehi bāhā-bala-paricitehi* which mean `with the sweat of one's brow and the strength of one's

arms' [AN. III. 45 & 76]. If self-employment were in trade, Buddhist texts indicate many areas in which sales are viewed with disfavour and are virtually banned. AN. III. 208 lists them as sale of 1. weapons of death and destruction [*sattha*], 2. living things [*satta*], i.e. animals, and perhaps humans like slaves included therein. The Commentary takes this to include humans only: *satta-vanijjā'ti manussa-vikkayo'* [AA. III. 303], 3. flesh of animals [*maṃsa*], i.e. fish and meat. [Having twisted *satta* in 2 to mean humans only, the Commentary has now to twist *maṃsa* which means flesh or meat to mean 'sale of meat yielding animals like swine and deer': *maṃsa-vanijjā'ti sūkara-migādayo posetvā tesam vikkayo.* ibid.], 4. alcohol and drugs [*majja*], i.e. anything that leads to drunkenness or loss of sane judgement and 5. poisonous substances [*visa*], whether at personal individual level or at collective national level as material for chemical warfare. In terms of items 1, 4 and 5, we would consider these Buddhist injunctions as incredibly accurate anticipations of the diabolic world-wide transactions we witness today: whether they be the underworld arms deals of super powers, large-scale illicit drug peddling from Mexico, Marseilles or Myanmar or the enormous outpouring of alcohol, produced legally and with state approval in the face of resultant disasters or illegally produced by our own slum-dwellers as well as by protected tycoons.

It is in view of these inestimably calamitous ill effects that come in the wake of such processes of earning money, whether by individuals or by the state as we witness today, that the concept of justifiability or righteousness of those processes [or the quality of *dhammika* or *dhamma-laddha* of monies so obtained] is insisted on in Buddhist social ethics. Having safeguarded this aspect of wealth production in terms of justifiability, Buddhist texts go further to clarify as to how these monies should be meaningfully utilised. Buddhists nowhere envisage a money-hoarding society. In a chapter entitled Utilisation of Wealth or *bhogānaṃ ādiyā*, the Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 45 f.] spell out five different ways in which one's wealth or earnings may be profitably and meaningfully spent. Such expenditure, deliberately carried out with careful planning, is held out as

rewarding and as leaving no room for regrets [*a + vippaṭisāro*].

These five different modes of expenditure deserve closer analysis and careful study both for their magnanimity and philanthropy as well as their social comprehensiveness. The very first mode in terms of which one's well earned income is to be spent [*uṭṭhāna-viriyādhigatehi bhogehi bāhā-bala-paricitehi sedāvakkhittehi dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi* loc. cit.] embraces the family as a totally comprehensive unit, reckoning very much in the manner of the Sigāla Sutta [DN. III. 180-193] with every component which contributes to its successful running. It is as if they were conscious of the necessity of total integration of the diverse segments of the larger family web into a realistic whole, almost to the extent the NASA scientists are concerned with the totality of the infinite components of a space-shuttle. Unless this co-ordination in social integration is guaranteed to the same extent as at NASA, family life of humans will never record a successful take off. Even with repeated replacement of engines or parts thereof, they will never be off the ground.

The first block which centres round the family consists of [See AN. III. 45 f.]

1. the originator of the income. He unquestionably gets the first place, with priority over everybody else. The very motivation to work and earn is the acquisition and possession of personal comfort and joy. Therefore above everything else, the originator of income must make himself [*attānaṃ*] comfortable [*sukheti*] and happy [*piṇeti*].
2. Next come parents or *mātā-pitāro* [and very rightly so]. Everybody starts with one's own parents, well before the arrival of wife and children on the scene.
3. Wife and children take their place third, together with the household work-staff [*puttadāra-dāsa-kammakāra-porise*].

It is to be noted with admiration that the household staff are included among the beneficiaries of family income. Their very specific contribution to the sum total of family well-being appears to be strictly and honestly recognised. Elsewhere [AN. III. 77], even a more distantly connected section of the labour force in one's service, and therefore contributing to one's prosperity, are brought in to be

included among such beneficiaries [... *sakkaroti garukaroti māneti pūjēti*]. They are referred to as working hands engaged in fields and factories or in agricultural and industrial pursuits [*khetta-kammanta-sāmanta-samvohāre*].

People are also motivated to work because they wish to spend some part of what they earn in the process for the benefit of their friends and dear ones [*mittāmacce*]. This constitutes the second block. People are equally aware of the need for security against calamities and misadventures like natural disasters of floods and fires, threats from violence [*yā tā honti āpadā aggito vā udakato vā rājato vā corato vā appiyato vā dāyādato* AN. III. 45]. This provides the third motivation. History of the human community, viewed globally, shows that they are not totally bereft of or insensitive to what would be termed social and religious obligations. These certainly belong to an area which is well outside mere materialistic considerations. This fourth group consists of one's obligation to provide for *a.* one's kinsmen [*ñāti-bali*], *b.* one's guests [*atīthi-bali*], *c.* obligations towards the dead in one's community [*pubba-peta-bali*], *d.* the payment of state dues [*rāja-bali*] and *e.* religiously guided duties like obligations towards the gods [*deva-* or *devatā-bali*]. This is the fourth source of motivation.

The fifth and the last division in this study of uses of one's earnings, or viewing it differently, as prompting for people to work whereby one gathers wealth, we have the generous provision of material needs [*udhaggikaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ paṭiṭṭhāpeti*] for the benefit of the religious community who, by their own good example, could adequately provide the desirable spiritual leadership to the community [*Ye te smaṇa-brāhmaṇā mada-ppamādā paṭiviratā khanti-soracce nivīṭṭha ekaṃ attānaṃ damenti ekaṃ attānaṃ samenti ekaṃ attānaṃ parinibbāpentī.* op. cit.]. The use in this context of words like *sovaggikaṃ* [heaven-bound], *sukha-vipākaṃ* [resulting in happiness] very much highlights the popular concern for a happy and prosperous life after death [... *sovaggikaṃ sukhavipākaṃ sagga-saṃvattanikaṃ*]. While this consideration could be regarded as yet another attractive incentive to push people to energetic

engagement in work, it also turns out to be equally propelling towards spiritual growth.

## Lesson 13

### Poverty, Hunger, and Under-Development

[A little bit of relevant Buddhist thinking]

Neither the teachings of the Buddha, nor the members of the Buddhist Sangha who are regarded as their custodians and exponents could be expected to clear and sweep clean, all by themselves and that with the minimum delay, the social entanglements into which a reckless society, in any part of the world, is seen slipping day after day. What is possible here on the one hand is only adequate cautioning, and on the other, the generation of an awareness in the minds of those involved to put themselves on the right gear. Then with a change of pace and a change of heart, a crisis may be averted.

#### **Poverty [Pali *dāḷiddiya* / Skt. *dāridriya*]**

To one who is not a mendicant, to one who lives the life of a householder in the world, poverty is indeed a cause of grief. Viewed in terms of Buddhist thinking, poverty means that one possesses only a little or nothing at all called one's own [*assako*]; one is not affluent and in plenty [*anāḷhiko*]; one has to be constantly in debt to others, borrowing money [*īṇaṃ ādiyati*] on the promise of repayment, with or without interest [*vaḍḍhiṃ paṭisuṇāti*]. The precise statement of this whole idea of poverty and all its associated evils in Pali in the Buddhist texts occurs in the Anguttara Nikaya as follows: *Dāḷiddiyaṃ bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino'ti? Evaṃ bhante. Yam'pi bhikkhave daḷiddo assako anāḷhiko īṇaṃ ādiyati īṇadānam'pi bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino'ti. ... Iti kho bhikkhave dāḷiddiyam'pi dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino īṇadānam'pi vaḍḍhi pi... codanā'pi anucariyā'pi bandhanam' pi dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino* [AN. III. 351.f.]

We choose to refer the reader to the primary sources in this manner, wherever necessary, mainly to intimate to him the wealth of clear and positive Buddhist thinking which pertains to areas of human well-being. Buddhist thinking

also closely scrutinizes the presence and absence of wellness in the human community. Buddhism does not turn its back on the happiness of the man of the world or the success or failure of his living. Nor does it explain its absence in society as the outcome of divine misanthropy or heavenly vengeance. Buddhists do not pray to anybody above or across for the daily gift of food and shelter. They must necessarily be acquisitions out of one's own endeavor and enterprise: *uṭṭhānādhigataṃ dhanam*.

Buddhist thinking knows a layman as being caught up in ramified relationships with persons and institutions. It also knows that to put himself in a meaningful and acceptable position in society, man needs the means, i.e. wealth and property [*dhana* and *bhoga*]. The well-known Sigāla Sutta [DN. III.180.ff.] is a learned thesis of the highest order on this subject which not only stresses the diversity of these human relationships but also their reciprocity and mutual interdependence.

### **Basic Needs**

Even in terms of every man's basic needs of food and clothing, the Buddhist texts appear to know, as it were, of the millions who daily go to bed at night without a proper and adequate meal. They say, almost with distressing pain of mind, that the food and clothing of such people who are in utter poverty is obtained with utmost difficulty: *Daḷidde appannapānabhojane kasiravuttike yattha kasirena ghāsacchādo labbhati* [AN.III, 385]. Here it is immediately reckoned with that poverty and hunger go hand in hand. That is why poverty or the absence of such means of existence makes a man unhappy in society, both in relation to himself and in relation to the community in which he lives.

Having thus recognized poverty as the bane of social order in the world, Buddhism concerns itself with the successful production of wealth, its economical and productive use and its conservation as reserves for leaner times. Buddhist texts thus penetrate deep into many areas of advanced economic thinking of the world today, second to none even in the most sophisticated political ideologies.

Starting at a lamentably low economic level so much as not to possess even the basic minimum of food and clothing [*kasirena ghāsacchādo labbhatī*], the first remedial measure recommended is that the person in such a sad situation should himself take the initiative to acquire some amount of money or wealth [*dhana*]. When the question is put as to how riches are obtained [*Kathaṃ su vindate dhanam*. Sn. v. 185] , as was done by Ālavaka who is referred to as a Yakkha [perhaps a prosperous and affluent chieftain in the country] in the Ālavaka Sutta, the prompt and direct Buddhist reply was: 'He riches finds whose life is in the right, who bears his yoke with strenuous resolve'. These words, we believe, need no commentary.



In the Pali we have it as:

*Patirūpakārī dhuravā utthātā vindate dhanam.* Sn. v. 187.

If one were looking at this reply as a Buddhist, or as any one with sense and sanity at that, one must immediately take note of three basic concepts:

He whose life is in the right [*patirūpakārī*]

He who bears his yoke [*dhuravā*]

He who lives and works with strenuous resolve [*utthātā*]

To the Buddhist, there is such a thing as ethics of living, ethics derived through down to earth human considerations and not those derived through divine sanctions. Therefore so basic and vital to mankind. It is so even as he gets down to gather together his basic needs; it has to be within a visibly inviolable ethical frame-work. His life has to be in the right [*patirūpakārī* = does what is proper]. The other two considerations center on the role of the individual and his active involvement, as well as on the strength of his personality. Accepting personal responsibility [*dhuravā* = of firm resolve] to better his economic situation in life [*vindate dhanam*], one has to put in a good deal of honest striving [*utthātā*]. This line of action for economic redress, undoubtedly carries with it a dignity and a sense of triumph and achievement. The almost soul-elevating Pali word used here is the verb *utthahati* which means 'strives with firm resolve.'

Wherever the Buddhist texts speak of the wealth of a virtuous good man against which there can be no slogan shouting, they speak of it as being acquired with effort and striving [*utthāna-viriyādhigata* AN.III. 45 & 76] and add that it has been earned with the sweat of one's brow [*sedāvakkhitta*] and the might of one's arms [*bāhā-bala-paricita*]. It is also said to be righteously acquired [*dhammika* and *dhammaladdha*]. If it were not so, not only would money be the root of all evil but money would also be rooted in evil. This is why the

Dhammapada very firmly says that it would be the tragedy of household life if a man who dwells therein does not strive with firm resolve to establish his economic well being [*anuṭṭhāna-malā gharā* Dh. v. 241]. It would be of interest to note here that only a very few translators of the Dhammapada get this correct. Many others who translate it as 'non-repair is the bane of houses', guided by Commentarial misdirection, only provide frivolous amusement and add hardly any sense to the injunction.

### **Relief Measures.**

Buddhists also recommend relief measures, both at society level and at state level, to ease this lamentable situation of poverty. Accepting as real the age old social malaise of *haves* and *have-nots*, the Buddhists recommend the act of *dāna* or charitable giving as a corrective measure. One is called upon to view this act of making good a deficiency in one's social group as a source of joy and satisfaction, yielding good results, right here and now [*dāna-saṃvibhāga-rato*: delighting in giving and sharing at AN. III. 53]. It is also looked upon as a willingness on the part of men and women to part with some of their possessions [*vossaggarato* Ibid.]. *Dāna* thus viewed from the religious angle stimulates the growth of such high-ranking virtues like *mettā* [friendliness, loving kindness], *karuṇā* [compassion] and *muditā* [appreciative joy]. They are divinely noble modes of living in the life of man [*brahmavihāra*].

As part of state policy, the rulers are expected to alleviate poverty by making planned gifts of money to put people on their feet and enable them to make a start in life on their own [See Cakkavattisīhanāda sutta at DN. III. 66 f. *iminā tvam ambho purisa dhanena attano mātāpitaro ca posehi puttadārañ ca brāhmaṇesu ... saggasaṃvattanikaṇ'ti*]. It is also the responsibility of the state to some extent to open avenues of employment and correctly put people in places where they would make their best, there being no square pegs in round holes or *vice versa*. They are to be employed, each according to his ability and competence [*Ye rañño janapade ussaḥimsu kasigorakkhe vanijjāya ... rājaporise...* DN. I.136]. It is

to be noted that in every case, whether it is for the production of wealth or for the correct and fruitful utilization of wealth, the efficiency and diligence of the person concerned is of primary importance. In Buddhism, the machinery, for social upgrading is basically the culture of man [i.e. the development of his cultural components of word and deed and his basic social and religious values] which make him a man who has developed himself: *bhāvitatta*.

Let us now turn our attention to the question of hunger to which we have already referred under the Buddhist concept of man's basic needs of food and clothing [*ghāsa-cchādana-paramo* and *ghāsacchādanaparamatā* at MN. I.360; DN. I.60]. It is at poverty level that these, namely food and clothing are obtained with utmost difficulty [*daḷidde ... kasirena ghāsacchādo labbhati*. AN. III. 385]. Thus it goes without saying that poverty and hunger go hand in hand. Nevertheless, as far as Buddhist texts go, it is a painful situation which is not to be made light of. The Dhammapada which we wish to present as the Buddhist Guide Book of Life, i.e. the book of guidance for both monk and layman, aptly calls hunger the dreaded disease [*jīghacchā paramā rogā* at DhP. v. 203].

Around this verse is told the well-known and at the same time the most touching story of how the Buddha once had a poor hungry peasant fed and comforted, before he set about to preach the *dhamma* to him. [*Aññātara-upāsaka-vatthu* in the Sukhavagga of the Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā Vol. III. 261 f.].

In calling hunger the dreaded disease, it is said with down to earth realism that no amount of medication ever cures this ailment. It is known to be the disease perennial, nevertheless by no means welcome or tolerable. The Buddha himself makes the precise comment that 'afflicted with pangs of hunger, one comprehends not the *dhamma*, even while it is being preached' [*jīghacchādukkhena dhamme desiyamāne'pi paṭivijjhituṃ na sakkhissatī'ti*. DhA.III. 263].

## **Moderation.**

At the same time, over-eating is looked upon with disdain and is viewed as leading to ill-health and physical damage and discomfort. Moderation in eating, on the other hand, is considered contributory to good health and physical comfort [*appābādhata* and *appātaṅkatā* as well as *lahuṭṭhāna, bala* and *phāsuvihāra* MN. 1. 37]. One word of caution here. The media today, all the world over, misleads the world on the question of food and clothing, food in particular. Advertising has reached the peak of perfection, with its ability to deceive and entice. Eat in the interests of the salesman, and positively not of the consumer is more or less the slogan today. But be not misled by such cliches of the business world where consumerism reigns supreme today.

Buddhism is non-ascetic in its attitude to food. The Bodhisatta totally rejected the starvation policy which he had taken upon himself while he was experimenting with his severe austerities. He declared in no uncertain terms that he could never attain any blissful states with a body reduced to such utter emaciation [*Na kho taṃ sukaraṃ sukhaṃ adhigantuṃ evaṃ adhimattakasimānam pattakāyena . Yannūnā'haṃ olārikaṃ āhāraṃ āhāreyyaṃ odanakummāsan'ti*. MN. 1.247]. One single look at the Gandharan image of Śākyamuni as Bodhisatta practicing austerities would convince us both of the severity of his austerities referred to above as well as of the wisdom of his judgment. He took a realistic view of the body's need for food. Accepting its basic need on the one hand, he specifies firmly its limits on the other.

It is with such an attitude to life and its basic requirements that Buddhism endorses and encourages correct earning of money and honorable acquisition of wealth [*uṭṭhānādhiyataṃ dhanam* and *dhammaladdha bhoga*]. It is in order that one may feed and clothe oneself adequately as well as look after the needs of one's dependents like one's parents and one's wife and children. For want of space here we would only refer the reader to a delightful treatise on this subject under the title *bhogānaṃ ādiyā* or Utilisation of Wealth which appears in the

Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III 45 f.].

## Elimination of Hunger.

In order to eliminate hunger among the humans, Buddhist texts speak not only of the energetic production of wealth [*uṭṭhānaviriyādhigataṃ dhanam*] and the consequent increase of buying power but also recommend the industrious production of food through diligently handled agriculture. In the Therīgāthā, our exemplary Theri Paṭācārā observes this commendable hunger-eliminating process through agricultural production in these words.

*Naṅgalehi kasaṃ khettaṃ bījāni pavapaṃ chamā  
puttadārāni posentā dhanam vindanti mānavā.*

Thig. v. 112

With ploughs ploughing their fields,  
the seeds they sow on the land.  
To feed their wives and children  
the men thus earn their wealth.

Translated by the author

She has obviously seen the activities of enterprising lay men, operating obviously in the more industrious and saner sections of the human community, and says that men plough their fields and sow seed therein to raise crops to feed their families and to build up their economy. It is undoubtedly the enterprise and industry of the lay community thus reflected which stirred her up into her spiritual earnestness.

It is the inspiration of such activity of well-meaning wise men which stirred Paṭācārā up to her spiritual quest. While Buddhist texts essentially set their eyes on the attainment of transcendental goals, one discovers also a great wealth of information addressed to the lay householders which aim at achieving success for the man of the world, both from the point of economic prosperity and his harmonious social inter-relatedness.

Conscious of the need to handle the problem of adequate food in society and

its well managed distribution, Buddhist texts go so far as to instruct for the smooth handling of the provision of food even for workmen at work places. We discover here a vital point of labor disputes of today, namely the care and concern for the welfare of workmen, handled smoothly with ease and success. In the handling of human labor, provision of meals in addition to wages is considered a *sine qua non*. In addition to wages which are calculated and given on a monthly basis [*māsikaṃ paribbayaṃ*], there also had to be provision of meals in the handling of human labor [*bhatta-vetana anuppadānena* at DN. III. 191].

This term *bhatta vetana* certainly is not wages for food as is mistakenly rendered quite often in Sinhala translations with *bataṭa avaśya vaṭup* by Sri Lankan scholars of great eminence, both monk and layman. It must necessarily be *bat hā vaṭup*, i.e. food and wages. This interpretation of ours is more than amply supported by the Dīgha Nikāya Commentary on the Kūṭadanta Sutta at DA. I. 296 which precisely states that it is daily food and monthly wages [*Bhatta-vetanan'ti devasiakam bhattañ ca māsikaṃ paribbayañ ca*]. Commentary on the Sigālaka Sutta at DA. III. 956 equally well supports this distinction between the provision of food to the workmen and payment of wages as two different items saying *bhatta-dānena c'eva paribbaya-dānena ca*.

Insight with regard to the equitable distribution of food, cautioning against misappropriation and hoarding of food by unscrupulous individuals is also very much reflected in the Aggañña Sutta of the Digha Nikaya [DN. III.92]. Here we witness a rationing process of agricultural produce, almost at a food-gatherers age [*sāliṃ vibhajeyyāma*, i.e. divide up the available portions of rice yield] and set up limits on consumption [*mariyādam ṭhapeyyāma*]. *Mariyādam* here [which we choose to translate as 'limits of consumption'] has been twice mistranslated by two different translators as 'rice fields' in 1921 and 1987. Here is Rhys Davids of 1921: 'Come now, let us divide off the rice fields and set boundaries thereto. And so they divided off the rice and setup boundaries round it.' [Dialogues III.

87/DN. III. 92]. In 1987 Maurice Walshe translates it as: 'So now let us divide up the rice in to fields with boundaries. So they did so.' [Thus Have I Heard by Maurice Walshe. p. 412].

## **Under-development**

Finally let us address ourselves to this talk of today about under development. Does anybody anywhere know as to what should be the correct meter-reading as far as development is concerned? Can there be such a standardization? It is unimaginable that there could be such a thing as Greenwich Meridian time in the development process. Its variability has to be conceded in terms of religious, cultural and ethnic differences, to mention only a few basics of variation. Schumacher in his *The Small is Beautiful*, we believe, makes an honest attempt to view this problem with detachment. It is colonialist or pedagogical to think otherwise. Or putting it differently, it is Apartheid-like thinking. The dangers of accepting such value judgments for whatever reason, without questioning, are too numerous. It exposes groups of people of smaller stature to certain types of contamination, infection and deterioration, under the crushing pressure of clumsy boots of the bigger brothers. Policy wise, the talk of under development and under developed countries makes available new markets for the disposal and sale of the stock-in-trade of such vociferous groups. Whether they trade in political cliches, social concepts, religious dogmas or lifestyles, the painful global process of trafficking and the equally painful products of overriding are the same. It makes dressed up Chimpanzees and Orangutans of poor humans who have a right to retain their identities with a legitimate pride and dignity. This generally is what the humans in the so-called developing countries have to face and put up with in their process of development.

People should move towards a more meaningful goal of development, well within their means, a goal which finally does not shatter their image, a goal which they can well afford. Unborn generations should not have to pay for our fallacies of today. Let every Buddhist, both at the top and the bottom, realize that the sky



is not the limit in development. Policy- makers would do well to remember, at least out of sympathy for the people for whom the policies are being made, not to take the affluent countries with their top-heavy material culture as our models.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let it be remembered that Buddhism upholds a policy of dignified detachment both from persons and things of the world, while advocating the greatest measure of philanthropy and magnanimity. One should not blunder into viewing this as a state of indifference. Our identities being carefully discerned both at personal and at group levels, religion or culture-wise, we should do nothing to jeopardize that position. The required degree of detachment depends on that identity, who we are and what we stand up for, like that of teacher from pupil. So also is the direction of alignment. This is where a real and intelligent understanding of *sammā vimutti* [i.e. true and correct release or liberation] plays its vital role. Let us therefore develop *sammā diṭṭhi*, i.e. correct vision in a philosophy of life, contributing as it does to detachment. And mind you, detachment without tears and regrets, and to consequent tranquillity and peace. The results should be as good as that of an unmanned space-ship flight, reaching the planned goal. *Sammā diṭṭhi* as the initial stage, leading in its upward process, would ultimately end up in perfect release or *sammā vimutti*, i.e. two stages beyond the Noble Eight fold Path [*dasariṅga-samannāgato arahā hoti*. MN. III. 76].

Lesson 14  
 Sale, Trade, and Export  
 as Aspects of  
 National Economic Development  
 - A Buddhist Review

These concepts of sale, trade and export imply that people, individuals or groups or even a country as a whole, have in excess of their needs many things that they can dispose of to others, near or far, in exchange for monetary returns. These things may include, among others, many items of natural resources like minerals etc., agricultural produce generated by man and manufactured goods of industrial production. All these imply that man has already gone well beyond the age of food gatherers. In many areas in Sri Lanka, even today, we are still primitive gatherers than growers according to a set plan or pattern.

Buddhist texts envisage, in their myths and legends, that man even as far back as the food gatherers' age, like old Adam of Biblical origin, was showing signs of becoming more and more corrupt and immoral [*Tesaṃ no pāpakānaññeva akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pātubhāvā ... Aggañña Sutta* at DN. III. 91]. He was trying to overstep his limits and go beyond bounds of propriety. In either case, it was undoubtedly being offensive to men and women with whom humans have to live as comrades. To food gatherers, self-growing corn is said to have been freely available. But a gradual breakdown in their moral goodness apparently brought about an imbalance and consequent shortage of food. The matter had to be taken up seriously and apportioning of food supplies had necessarily to come about. Buddhist texts show grave concern over this and the corrective steps taken are referred to as 'rationing out the available supply of grain and setting up limits of consumption' [*Yannūna mayaṃ sāliṃ vibhajeyyāma mariyādaṃ thapeyyāmā'ti*. DN. III. 92].

It should be noted here that we suspect the translation of this in Rhys Davids' Dialogues of the Buddha [1921], Vol.III. p.87 which runs as 'Come now let us divide off the rice fields and set boundaries there to' to be somewhat off the mark. We readily admit that Rhys Davids' work was a pioneering one. It is more than surprising to find Maurice Walshe, sixty-six years later, making the rendering no better in his translation in Thus Have I Heard [1987], p. 412. This is what he produces: 'So now let us divide up the rice fields with boundaries.' We provide these details here to give our readers an insight into the early Indian concepts of supply and demand, of production and consumption etc. and their gradual maturing up, in course of time, to sound economic principles.

Early Buddhist texts also know a great deal about the growth of communities, urban culture and industrial development. Rulers appear to handle with great success the resources of the land, both human and material, undoubtedly under proper and wise direction of counsellors and directors, This is where Buddhism promptly steps in to admonish rulers to seek the advice of serious and sincere religious men, and act accordingly in times of political crisis or collapse of governments [See Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta, D. III. 61]. Kūṭadanta Sutta of the Digha Nikaya [DN. I.135 f.] reflects great wisdom in this direction.

It shows how the rulers handle the man power resources of the land with great wisdom, without putting square pegs in round holes. Paying due heed to personal skills and aptitude, people are selected for agricultural and pastoral pursuits [*kasi-gorakkhē*], for trade and commercial ventures [*vānijjāya*] as well as for civil and administrative purposes [*rāja-porise*]. An amazingly impregnated Pali word *ussahatī* which carries with it the meaning of 'ability and willingness to cope with a situation' is used every time when 'competence, aptitude and temperament' is thought of in terms of successful employment.

In this manner, Buddhist texts provide a great deal of useful information relating to the productivity of the land and its people. There are incentives and inducements coming from the state. To those engaged in agriculture, the king or

the state is said to provide seed [*bījā*] for sowing and planting as well as consumer goods for the men who work on the land. This is implied in the word *bhatta* which is coupled with the word *bījā* [as in *bījā-bhatta* at DN. I. 135] given above. The extent of state patronage of agriculture can be gauged from the Commentarial note on this which speaks of 'repeated offers of seed, consumer goods and even agricultural implements in case of failure or inadequacy' [*dinne appahonte aññam̐pi bījāñ ca bhattañ ca kasi-paribhaṇḍañ ca sabbaṃ detu*. DA. I. 296]. To those engaged in trade, monetary provision for the purchase of stocks, i.e. goods for sale, is made. Various sectors of employment are correctly assessed and appreciated. These attitudes invariably provided job satisfaction to everyone concerned.

With this kind of set-up and organisational skill in the state, there was undoubtedly vast amounts of produce in the land, both agricultural and industrial, well above local needs. Indeed so, because everybody was happy and willing to work for their country. People's needs by way of food and clothing, and even articles of day to day use were perhaps more than adequately met. In consequence of this, people were happy and joyous [*manussā ca mudā modamānā* DN. I. 135]. State revenue was at a very high level [*mahā ca rañño rāsiko bhavissati*. Ibid.]. With enough goods to sell, and with enough money in the hands of people to buy, trade with them would have been a very smoothly lubricated social process, with neither the buyer nor the seller having any need to resort to fraud or cunning. Hence no crime, no villainy or restlessness in the land [*Khematṭhā janapadā akaṇṭakā anupapīā* - Ibid.], these being invariable rewards for good governing. We believe the above instructions are eternally wise lessons in state craft through which rulers in any part of the world should be put. These, we also believe, are lessons to be learnt via religion. This is why the English educated western world, by no means Sri Lankan, speak with honesty when they speak of RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT. This is the title of a recent publication of the Oxford University Press brought out in 1994.

Thus we see that with wise and benevolent government of a country where the rulers genuinely express a keen desire to make people happy, that being the Buddhist definition of the word *rājā* as one who keeps the subjects delighted [*janam rañjayatīti rājā*], people turn to work and the country invariably becomes productive. Its being productive is qualitatively and quantitatively, both in agriculture and in industry.

Industry, in the first instance, must be relative to the industrial potential of the land. There must be labour, i.e. man power resources which can justifiably be harnessed, without indiscreetly tearing off the males and the females, the younger and the older from their homes, from their well-established or should be well-established home lives, on the mere offer of fat salary packets.

Evils of these are already evident in the country today as revealed in many recent commission reports about newly set up industrial zones. One must also see to the adequacy of raw material [not forgetting the fate of government established plywood factories etc. and their closure owing to the lack of adequate supplies of raw material] and the legitimacy of establishing any industrial plants without serious health hazards to people and any threat to the environment, both physical and cultural.

Produce thereafter moves from hand to hand, in terms of supply and demand, and the process of trade is set in motion. To begin with, what is in excess of need, also begins to find their way out by way of export. This is followed by production for export. Nobody seems to be worried about as to what is produced and on whose advice and for export where. These certainly are vital considerations about which the country as a whole should know. In consequence of reliable and regular production of quality goods, new buyers can be sought who pay fair prices with larger margins of profit. In the world of trade today one can sooner or later discover crippling or even death-dealing viruses like preferences, protectionism, embargoes etc. Officials handling foreign affairs and trade ministries would and should know best to deal with these.

Thus it becomes clear that trade which comes in the wake of well organised productivity in the land can become a real determinant of life style of the people. Even if we start with the very early items of human civilisation like agriculture and cattle rearing, there are many illuminating ideas which we can gather from the wisdom of the ancients. Buddhist teachings which relate to successful living in the world into which we are born are full of such instructions. Wealth comes from the energetic and wise application of human resources.

The Pail expression of this idea runs as *Uttahātā vindate dhanam* in the Suttanipāta [Sn. v.187]. One gathers wealth through energetic striving. 'Care not for heat and cold in the weather pattern any more than you care for a blade of grass' [*Yo ca sītañ ca uṇhañ ca tiṇā bhiyyo na maññati*. DN.III. 185]. Thus run the Buddhist words of stimulation and inspiration. With this attitude, if one applies oneself to the task like an energetic man, happiness shall never dodge him. Our Buddhist texts say [*Karam purisa-kiccāni so sukhā na vihāyati*. Ibid.].

As means of making a living, agriculture and cattle-rearing seem to take precedence over industry. Science and technology which are much needed in industry come on the scene of human development very much later. Agriculture, we believe, in its very pursuit gets man nearer to nature and watches, as it were, the growth of man, with nature in close proximity. This is a healthy aspect in life to look out for. The cutting down of the wet forests of South America to make grasslands for cattle-rearing in the interests of meat processors and beef eaters is looked upon today as a contradiction and a glaring mistake. In Sri Lanka, clearing the hill tops of central highlands to find room for tea plantations does not appear to be any different in its stupidity. It only serves the interests of powerful blocks of egotistic gold-seekers.

Before big money is sought for smaller blocks of power wielders, the larger areas of the commoner of the land must be looked into. Thus should the generosity and magnanimity of the state be manifested. The basic food supplies of the bulk of the country, and not the import of luxury items like ham and bacon,

must be the urgent priority. Better the possibility of getting these out of our own land, happier and more secure would everybody be. As items of food supply for the majority and our masses, the freshness and wholesomeness of what is grown in our own country must be better guaranteed. Home-grown *mung* dhal, i.e. *mun aṭa* should replace imported Mussore dhal. So should our sweet potatoes or *batala*, with many competitively rich varieties of red-skins, whites and yellows sweep the board and send imported varieties of potatoes underground. But many Sri Lankan housewives would weep and wipe a tear off their faces if imported dhal and potatoes were not on their daily menu or were not available for purchase at their CWE and the Super markets, or even at black market prices. They would find it difficult to thicken their soups without imported dhal, not knowing what miracles others do with things like cob corn or *baḍa iringu*.

What about the dozens of varieties of yams or tubers [*Vel ala* and *Jāvā ala* etc], white and purple, both aerial and underground, which grow on the creepers in the country side? They would make lovely trailers even on mango trees in the city gardens, with bunches of delightful aerial tubers, outdoing in beauty the grape wines. Mature ones of these aerial tubers, when boiled and peeled, would beat in shape and colour a plateful of larger-sized strawberries. The test of them is in the eating. These miracle food providers only need for their growing pits of about three feet by three feet by three feet, filled with soft peaty soil, produced in compost pits with your own garden leaves. Thanks to nature, the sun and rain would look after them, even without having to chant for their growth, saying *Devo vassatu kālena sassa-sampatti hotu ca*.

These yams and tubers, we have eaten with relish, more than sixty, seventy years ago, as children of six and seven, often sharing them with our neighbours in the village, as we dug them out of the ground with our grand parents. Ask us and we shall tell you more about them. Some of these, we would say are good enough for export to any part of the world. We have seen enough of these imported to Canada, during a not very long stay in Toronto, from the West Indies

Islands. Why not plan for their production and export, if lotus roots and canned Coconut water from Thailand can be had in Australia and Tapioca yams from West Indies can be purchased in many Canadian cities?

Finally, talking in terms of sales, trade and exports, let us turn to a few pages of Buddhist thinking on this subject. The Buddha or his teachings, we are glad to note, has thought it fit to pass down to posterity a few instructions, a few guidelines regarding the propriety of trading in certain commodities. With the interests of humanity at heart, Buddhist thinking considers it necessary to pronounce judgement with regard to the permissibility of sale, within the human community, of certain commodities. In this business of sale and trade or *vanijjā* as they call it in our Buddhist texts [or *velandāma* in Sinhala], they have unequivocally placed a ban on the sale of five commodities. [See Anguttara III. 208. *Pañca imā bhikkhave vanijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā: sattha, satta, maṃsa, majja, visa*]. They are 1. *sattha* or weapons of destruction and armaments, 2. *satta* or living beings which is specifically taken here as 'sale of humans as slaves' [*manussa-vikkayo* at AA. III. 303], *maṃsa* or flesh of animals [i.e. of fish, bird or beast. But the Commentary explains it as 'sale of animals reared for meat': *sūkara-migādayo posetvā tesam vikkayo*. Ibid.], 4. *majja* or drugs and intoxicants and 5. *visa* or poison. The sale of these above listed items, it is enjoined, neither should one do, nor get others to do [*Iti sabbam'pi imaṃ vanijjam neva attanā na pare samādapetvā kāretum vaṭṭati*. Ibid.]

What a wisdom-packed vision of the world, reflected more than two and a half millennia ago. This is well before the development of science and technology which undeniably brought us to the forefront of deadly weaponry of war, causing limitless death and destruction as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not to speak of the carnage in the battle fields of Europe during the World War II and elsewhere. Whether in the battle field or in the domestic front, weapons are, by their very name, tools of destruction. Whether a woman carries a revolver, even a small sized one, in her hand bag to defend herself against her husband or her boy



friend, as publicly declared by high-ranking women from the most civilised parts of the world, guns and knives which come under the category of *sattha* are killer weapons. They are not to be made freely available through sale, neither to the adult nor the juveniles. They come therefore under forbidden articles of trade. With the development of scientific research and modern technology, more articles like plastic explosives of the suicide bombers probably have to be added to the list. The world of today knows of the menace of illicit sale of weapons of war, both openly and under cover.

The world knows enough of the history of the slave trade and about its whose who even in India. But even today the world witnesses a considerable amount of exploitation of labour, specially of children, females and the under privileged. They would all come under the trading and trafficking in humans. Buddhist thinking totally denounces it. Respectful and conscientious employment of females and younger ones is dealt with separately [See DN. III.191: *yathābalaṃ kammanta-saṃivadhānena*]. As for trading in meat or animals for meat production, we would assume the very first precept of the *pañca-sīla* would impose a ban on this. How can a Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, with a near seventy per cent of its population being Buddhist by religion, even at the level of rumour, be suspected of exporting meat to the world outside? In civilised states of democracy, at least in the east, there can be no secret pacts on these. People have a right to know as to what is going on in their name. Democracy is necessarily a form of government of the people.

Sale of drugs and alcohol is now going overboard everywhere. Marseilles produces marijuana and the United States of America kept on purchasing it from them for home consumption. One kept on saying 'We buy it because you produce it'. And the other, equally vociferously replied saying 'We produce it because you continue buying it from us'. After much wrangling, when Marseilles ceased to be the exporter, Mexico gleefully stepped in to be the honourable supplier. In the sector of alcohol, Sri Lanka's domestic sales as well as export to

the world outside, both necessarily come within this fourth item of forbidden commodities of sale. Buddhism or no Buddhism, the world knows of the menace of alcohol, both at domestic and at high elite social level. But fortunately or otherwise, we have built it, government after government, and mind you governments of people's choice, to be the bed rock of our national economy.

As for the final one of sale of poison, we Sri Lankans need some high-powered magnifying glasses to be really sensitive about this. In our sale of foods and some of our local medical products, we are not totally assured of their non-toxic quality. With us, the Bureau of Sri Lankan Standards [SLS] is one of fairly recent origin. We can therefore be selling out a good many items of harmful food and drink to our people, particularly to our children.

This subject of forbidden commodities of sale is today one of international importance. In the interests of physical health and moral well being of our unborn generations, let us give serious thought to this. We hope that moment will not be a day too late.

Lesson 15  
 The Development of Society  
 and the Commission of Crime  
 seen alongside the Solace of Religion  
 - viewed via Buddhism

Medium-sized dictionaries in common use today define society as 'the sum of human conditions and activity regarded as a whole functioning interdependently.' [The Concise Oxford Dictionary]. The same source adds a second note: 'a social community (all societies must have firm laws).' We would immediately agree that society is a conglomeration of humans, adding the proviso that it is 'a collection into a coherent mass.' Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary adds further: 'a corporate body: any organized association.' As we take note of these observations 'a corporate body', 'functioning interdependently' and 'organized association' we are driven to concede to mankind a plurality of such societies, with their own organizational diversity and functional interdependence.

Humans on this planet, created or evolved, date back to several millennia, even before the beginning of the Christian era. India and China could boast of a very high level of culture, material, intellectual and spiritual, of such people. The *ṛta* of the Vedic Indians and *tao* of the ancient Chinese people reflect the moral consciousness of these ancient cultures and the relationship of morality to human welfare. The Indians, in fact, wisely created their own gods like Indra and Varuna [*ṛtasya gopau* = guardians of their cosmic and moral order or *ṛta*] to look after these specific areas. Testimony of history being in our favour, we would unhesitatingly subscribe to the above view of human societies as 'organized associations', 'functioning interdependently', but with their own levels of ideological high-water mark.

World organizations interested in social welfare activities have to be constantly reminded of this diversity of social organizations and the plurality of their aspirations. World powers, whether they be political, religious or ethnic, cannot be allowed to entertain too many messianic ambitions of saving the millions, viewed in different epochs of history as being pagans in terms of religious criteria and latterly as being under-developed in terms of their own economic assessment. If one does not pay heed to this, the swing could be like the Afro-centric challenge of the Euro-centric emphasis in the presentation of church history in Christianity, leading often to bitter and unpleasant results of maligning and vilification. In the absence of this awareness, the world has been compelled in recent times, to witness in many areas, massive or less massive processes of steamrolling in the name of social welfare or economic upgrading or political liberation.

Buddhism thus basically accepts the identity and independence of all such groups which are 'corporate bodies: organized associations'. We have to accept that they have their own laws and conventions which govern their life and activities. At times, these may not be more than age-old traditions which, in their social administration, are as binding as their legal counterparts elsewhere. Buddhist texts recognize the former as 'the judgement of the wise' [viññū + upavāda]. It is expected to exercise its authority over society at all times with as much validity as the laws of the land. Even in determining the legitimacy of privately owned property, Buddhist texts specify that there should be no legal objections or possibilities of prosecution [adaṇḍāraho] in terms of ownership. In addition to this, nor should such ownership come under the reproach of 'judgement of the wise' [anupavajjo]. For full details of this, see the analysis provided under the enforcement of the second precept relating to theft in the Fivefold Code of Buddhist Ethics of the Pañcasīla [Yattha paro yathākāma-kāritaṃ āpajjanto adaṇḍāraho anupavajjo hoti. MA.1. 198 & KhpA. 26 = Where, in claiming proprietary rights over property, one should not be liable to be prosecuted or punished under the laws of the land, or does not come under the

censure or reproach ( of the wise)].

Therefore in the Buddhist concept of social welfare or social assistance, the major contribution should primarily be to assist such groups who are in need, to maintain law and order within themselves and to develop their stature individually and collectively, on their own lines, within a framework of sound moral values. The best example of this Buddhist attitude occurs in the story of the legendary Universal Monarch referred to as *Rājā Cakkavatti*. When he is requested by his provincial kings to rule over them, he admonishes them to continue with their own forms of government as they did before [*yathābhuttañca bhujātha*], but insists that they maintain a perfect moral order within their kingdoms, strictly adhering to the observance of the Fivefold Code of Ethics of the *Pañcasīla* [DN.11.173 f.], referred to above.

Growth and development in any society is not to be viewed only in terms of its material output and consequent uplift of its life style. Underlying all development should be a core of values which are entrenched in the people. They necessarily have to be both directive and restrictive. On the one hand, they have to be target-oriented and keep moving forward, hoping to achieve specific goals. On the other, there could also be prevalent in society, or seen newly emerging, certain patterns of thinking and acting. But they should necessarily be not unacceptable to the already established culture patterns. Leadership in society, both political and religious, has necessarily to take cognizance of this. In the world today, when assistance is calculated to be offered for developmental programs, this aspect of the situation is grossly overlooked. For various considerations of expediency, one chooses to turn a blind eye on them. At times they are even deliberately dodged, even by those at the very top.

What we have attempted so far is to take up for discussion a universally valid concept of society. We believe that equipped with such a concept, it should be possible for persons or groups in any part of the world to stretch out a hand of assistance to those in other parts who are in need of it. This should of course

always be without the danger of damaging or overrunning their cultural worth. It is clearly evident that the world today, at least the world of saner and more magnanimous men, is feeling more and more the need to be cautious on this issue and to provide assistance only on these healthy lines.

We have now unhesitatingly stated that assistance towards social welfare in the so-called less developed countries should come primarily in the area of establishing law and order. Whatever inoffensive aid there is to follow, they could come in due order. In other words it should be towards making a genuine contribution to stabilising the social equilibrium within a community of people. It is in countries where such assistance is urgently needed that bitter battles, allegedly on account of political, religious and ethnic differences are seen to be raging. It is no secret, and by no means an exaggeration, that assistance at world level often come to validate these grievances and hostilities, and add to their inflammableness. The naked truth of this, i.e. the offer of assistance at this stage and at that level is, putting it in plain language, is seen to be no more than 'fishing in troubled waters.'

What we do today in such situations, with hastily and arbitrarily taken decisions, even at the highest international levels, is the provision of greater 'fire power' in the name of defence, to the one or the other of two battling sides, with whom the big powers have secretly decided to invest. Therefore it is paramount that where so ever assistance or aid is offered to avert or overcome a crisis situation, in peace or in war, that we insist on the observance of perfect neutrality, unmindful of religious, ethnic or political loyalties and alliances. Anything to the contrary would amount to no less than a vulgar exploitation of a moment of political weakness. On closer analysis, these situations are even discovered to be the results of ingenious international manipulation, aiding and abetting terrorism, according each one's choice.

Let us now turn our attention to the second area of our subject, viz. crime. Crime in society, no matter in which particular area or sector it finds its luxuriant

growth, stands in the way of development, both with regard to down-to-earth material growth, as well as socio-moral and cultural enhancement. Crimes like man-slaughter literally bleeds society to death. Ask yourself today, in the east or the west, the question as to who kills and kill in what manner and for what purpose. The answers you get would just stun the world through its length and breadth. Teen-agers, nearer thirteen than nineteen, are capable of murdering in cold blood, persons much older, men and women, even one's own parents who beget them. Whether it be theft, hijacking, rape or any other like drug-related crimes, the situation is very similar. As to who commits crimes, sex wise, even women are becoming capable of many things or anything , although not in such large numbers at the moment. As to the *modus operandi*, it is now acknowledged in the technologically and scientifically more developed countries that criminals who are behind bars in prisons where they are locked up for crimes they have committed, are learning to perfect their techniques, improving on their old ones through what they see and hear over the media which are generously provided for their entertainment within these `houses of reform'.

The efficacy of the law enforcement authorities in some countries get these criminals behind bars sooner than in others. But few have ever been able to eradicate or reduce the criminality of these convicted persons to any appreciable extent. Strange enough, a good many of those who come out of these `houses of reform,' sometimes even having had the benefit of being put on parole, commit the same crime for which they had been originally convicted, with far greater intensity and alarmingly greater frequency.

It is here that one feels an early educative process of crime prevention, than one of prosecution and punishment, would pay better dividends. The latter, prosecution and punishment, indeed are indispensably needed, we hasten to add. But a long term process of value inculcation, during the most formative years of childhood to adolescence, would be what is much more needed. It would bring more calculable and wholesome results. For most criminals are seen and

heard admitting that the villainy of the crimes they committed was never a serious consideration in their lives or in their minds in the pre-crime early days. Neither the society in which they lived nor the corpus of public opinion in the midst of which they grew up, they vociferously declare, ever indicated this to them. The study of history of court cases in many countries in recent years reveals this. We have come across countless instances of the like. The history of the recently convicted school teacher Price in the U.S.A. who had sexually abused his female students over a period of more than a decade, un-objected and un-complained either by the victims or by society, as he boldly declared in court, is a good example of this.

In a belated and somewhat misguided and misdirected attempt to come to terms with a hostile, break-away youth. Both men and women, the world over, is seen to be giving them too many concessions. The hostility of youth, we would almost say, has been in most instances provoked. Parental pre-occupation in a highly competitive world has been one of the prime causes of this unrest and challenge. In the world of children, the consequent lack of attention and a resulting feeling of neglect, and an apparent negation and denial of rights has been admittedly smouldering in the background all the time.

Through social and other areas of stimuli, the young of today seem to be prematurely acquiring criminally dangerous feelings of freedom of thought and freedom of action. They are also seen cladding themselves in stupefying armours of self-righteousness. It is no secret that these patterns of aggressive thinking, far from being self-acquired by the younger generation, are the genuine products, primary or secondary, of diverse processes of indoctrination. One notices with unbroken regularity revengeful and retaliatory claims of lost or denied rights, demolishing challenges of authority levelled at churchmen and social scientists, and now reaching even up to parents at the domestic level. One also witnesses frustration at different levels in diverse areas of life activity, driving fiercely almost to suicidal limits.



Crime does not necessarily originate with the youth alone. But most crimes in society, especially in the western world today, are known to be traceable to youthful origin. Therefore in seeking remedial measures for the prevention of crime in society, one feels justified in saying that correction and steps for correction should be pushed as far back as the home where children could and should be handled in their formative years. The parents are called upon to play this teacher role. Therefore Buddhist thinking, with great vision and keen foresight, calls parents the 'first teachers' [*pubbācariyā* See AN.1.132]. They are the ones who initiate the introduction of children to the world [*imassa lokassa dassetāro* Ibid.]. The first graduation of one's progeny is indeed to take place in the home.

In this sphere, while Buddhist thinking is known to insist that correction, through a build-up of harmonious inter-personal relationships, should begin early at the domestic familial level, it also makes many meaningful recommendations for strengthening inter-familial and extra-familial relationships. The best study of this social analysis in terms of the components of the family and its adjuncts comes in the Sigāla Sutta of the Digha Nikaya [DN.III.180 ff.] The concept of the community and the extended family are very much counted upon in Buddhist socio-ethical considerations. They are all reckoned with as inexhaustible sources of inspiration, instruction and discipline, leaving little room for the much lamented single-parent-families or the fatherless homes of the today's world. This concept of a well-strung society is looked upon as the main mechanism which keeps the entire society in gear. Each individual in society, particularly as father or mother, is thus invested with a share of responsibility, both for his or her own personal well-being as well as the well-being of society as a whole. Herein nobody causes injury to or jeopardises the interests of the one or the other [*N'eva attavyābādhāya na para-vyābādhāya na ubhaya-vyābādhāya ...* See MN.1.415 = Contributing neither to the detriment of oneself, nor to the detriment of the other, nor of both...].

At a very early date of more than twenty-five centuries ago, Buddhism scores a first in offering to the world self-example or *attūpanāyika* [See SN.V. 353] as the basis of good ethical and moral living. The stabiliser for the moral goodness of the individual or society is not sought from outside. It is not the unwillingness to offend an external saving grace in which or whom one personally believes that keeps the humans in loving relationship to one another. It is indeed the down-to-earth humanness of love itself, i.e. deep-seated friendliness or universal loving kindness of one to the other, i.e. man and bird and beast [Pali *mettā*/Sk. *maitrī*].

The Buddha, in his renowned sermon at the Bamboo Gate or Veludvāra [Veludvāreyya Sutta at SN.V. 351 f.] puts forward this thesis of developing love and concern for all that exists [= *sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* Sn. v. 147], irrespective of being human or animal [= *ye keci pāṇa-bhūt'atthi* loc.cit.], or whether they be great in length or be large, medium or small in size [= *dīghā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā rassak'ānuka-thūlā* loc.cit.]. This one does on the basis of love and concern which one holds for oneself. Taking oneself as the example or putting oneself in the position of the other, let not one hurt or kill another [= *attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye*. Dh. v. 129]. The fact that you love yourself and like to have everything that is yours well guarded and protected, should prompt you to love and guard equally well everybody else. Such an attitude of persons to the world in which they live, each with a dignity and a responsibility of his or her own and not as products coming out of a mass-producing factory, should be a tower of strength for the world and should serve as a basis for its solidarity.

Such strength would readily be available at hand, at down to earth level, and does not need to be obtained privately or secretly from elsewhere, from a personally cherished source, and on a basis of favours for the chosen few of this creed or that, through prayer and supplication. In the absence of such a frame of mind one becomes capable of invoking the name of an unseen and only believed-in-power for support and justification, and dart across into the field to

massacre and destroy even one's own brethren, visibly present and seen besides oneself. Reports we have had during recent decades in world history have provided ample testimony to this.

It is on this basis of self-example that the Buddha attempted to reform and re-culture the people of the Bamboo Gate, both for their own happiness and prosperity here in this very existence as well as for a more blissful life after death. This is exactly what the people of Veludvāra sought from the Buddha [*Tesaṃ no bhavaṃ Gotamo amhākaṃ evaṃ-kāmānaṃ evaṃ-chandānaṃ evam-adhippāyānaṃ tathā dhammaṃ desetu yathā mayaṃ puttā-sambādha-sayanaṃ ajjhāvaseyyāma kāsika-chanadanaṃ paccaṇubhaveyyāma mālā-gandha-vilepanaṃ dhāreyyāma jātarūpa-rajataṃ sādīyeyyāma kāyassa bheda-parammaraṇā sugatiṃ saggam lokam upa-pajjeyyāmā'ti*. SN.V. 353]. It means: 'To us who have such desires, expectations and aspirations, let the Venerable Gotama preach a doctrine whereby we who have all the worries of bringing up children, and live a high quality life of luxury, and handle a lot of gold and silver, i.e. a lot of wealth, may reach the heavenly worlds after death.' The people, who as good home-dwelling lay-devotees [*gahapatayo*] heard it from the Buddha, were confident of the assurance given to them. They were told that any good lay-devotee [i.e. *ariyasāvako*] who is endowed with seven modes of noble living [= *sattahi saddhammehi samannāgato*] which consists of threefold good bodily conduct and fourfold restraint in speech and has, in addition, firm faith born of conviction in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha [= *Buddhe Dhamme Saṅghe. aveccappasādena samannāgato hoti*. Ibid. 355 f.] , and practices to perfection the moral code which is beloved of the worthy ones [*Ariyakantehi sīlehi samannāgato hoti akkhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi vinñū-pasatthehi aparāmatthehi samādhī-saṃvattanikehi*. Ibid.] It means: 'He is endowed with the good moral qualities which are dear to the worthy ones [*ariya*] which are unbroken, undamaged, unblemished and untarnished, which are unfettered, praised by the wise and not bound by ritualistic routine and which definitely lead to tranquillity of mind.] could declare himself to be a stream-winner

who would never fall off from his human state after death and be born in a degenerate lower existence or *apāya*. The residents of Veludvāra, non-Buddhist as they were at the outset, expressed their appreciation and declared their delight in what the Buddha taught and chose to follow the way he recommended [*Abhikkantaṃ bho Gotama ... ete mayaṃ bhavantaṃ Gotamaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma dhammañ ca bhikkhusaṅghañ ca. Upāsake no bhavaṃ Gotamo dhāretu ajjatagge pāṇ'upete saraṇaṃ gate'ti.* Ibid.].

It means: 'O Venerable Gotama, you have performed excellently well. We take refuge in you, O Lord, in your teaching and in the congregation of your good disciples. May Venerable Gotama accept us from today onwards as disciples who have taken refuge in you for the rest of our life'.

Out of such a process of healthy, social visualization there would emerge the correct atmosphere for the successful receipt of social assistance and whatever else is available by way of aid for social welfare for the much needed areas all over the world. Thus Buddhism is seen to stress the reality of the role of human endeavour in bringing about an optimum of human achievement, whether it be in the area of social wellness, intellectual growth, technological development or religio-cultural uplift. Bring to mind here the successful repair and correction of the Hubble Space Telescope not very long ago, well away from the *terra firma* of the humans, but by a team of humans which included even a woman in their midst. Buddhists do not venture to leave such a task in the hands of the gods.

Lesson 16  
Progress and Development  
and the Survival of Man on this Earth  
- as viewed by a Buddhist

In 1998, i.e. three years from now, Sri Lanka would claim having had fifty years of independence. Can we be sure of the direction in which we as a liberated people, liberated from centuries of colonial rule, have targeted our development process during this reasonably long period. From where have we picked up the norms or the yardsticks with which to measure our own progress , not only in the area of economic development, i.e. revenue for our state from anywhere? Or on the other hand , have we been caught up in a competitive , and at the same time a meaningless and devastating escalation?

We need to check on its sustainability and its wholesomeness, wholesome to the people for whom it is planned. Are not the people of the land and the land itself becoming a cat's paw in the so-called development process? According to the old stories we have learnt as children, it is the monkey and certainly not the cat who enjoys the nuts which are being so pulled out of the fire.

The last three decades or more of Sri Lankan history yield enough evidence for the verification of this. Not merely gusty winds, no matter where they have had their origin, have blown across our country. We have also been caught up in devastating whirl winds. Today it has to be admitted that we have lost sight of or we have been made insensitive to many important facts of our very existence in this small island which for many centuries has had its own distinct identity.

Multi-ethnicity and multi-religiousness have well and truly been realities in this country for centuries. As far as our memories go, even as far as the early decades of this century, the people of Sri Lanka, no matter to whichever ethnic group they belonged or in which part of the island they lived, did not require to be

tutored on this subject. Minor aberrations of relationships have occurred from time to time, but they have been corrected without long lasting side effects. The process and the spirit of give and take has been effectively so good that very little of what might be called serious grievances has persisted.

Personal identities of ethnic, religious or political groups and their peaceful co-existence were never believed to be mutually hostile. Even taking a look back into ancient history, the presence of temples for the worship of Hindu divinities by the royal ladies of Indian origin, within the palace yard of Polonnaruwa, is ample testimony to this. The first half of this century knew of considerable cultural inter-filtration among the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic communities of Sri Lanka. We do need to make a very serious and honest attempt for the restoration of such a climate. It is not because it serves the needs of any single group, but because it serves well the cause of all concerned.

With this brief clinical observation of the Sri Lankan infant of today, forty seven years after its delivery, and with the assigned task of rearing it to a healthy and robust growth, let us see how much of our own traditional wisdom could be of benefit to us. In the Buddhist context, development basically means the development of man, his character, his personality, his humanness in brief, alongside the improvement of his material prosperity. This latter are important in terms of the quality of life and in terms of the magnitude of achievement. Without getting an adequate awareness of this, he would not be able to visualise the perimeter of man's development. Viewing development from a highly egoistic angle, either singly or collectively, he would be completely heedless of the ill-effects of his development plans on everybody else besides himself, on the lives of others, on their cultural and religious preferences. He would turn out to be essentially unethical. The increase in the quantity and quality of material accessories which usually accompanies the concept and process of modern development has to be viewed as being only peripheral. Harnessing of all resources for the achievement of supersonic success in this area of materialistic

development and economic gain has led many nations and power blocs of the world to unscrupulous and, at times, despicable ways of achievement. It may even be described as a descent to vulgar levels of exploitation of man and nature.

Take just one look at the so-called industrial development of the world. Lack of correct and adequate vision and lack of planning in the interests of the world we live in has led to the overrunning of the activities of man into questionable areas of environment. That industrial waste comes in the wake of industrial production must be obviously clear to planners and policy makers, even though their laying down of policy often remains confined to the papers on their tables. Value judgements must be evident within the framework of their thinking. Otherwise, one has a right to ask as to who accepts responsibility for the consequences of their planning. This serious and grave offence of omission is now being recognised and reckoned with at international levels.

Think of the great disaster that has come upon the Great Lakes of North America. A crime committed many, many decades ago. Their aquatic life is ruined to the very rock bottom. On this side of the Atlantic, the same is true of the Baltic and the Mediterranean seas. It is so even of Lake Baikal in Soviet Russia. Over the last thirty or forty years the world has been learning the bitter lessons of these. But the obstinacy and the stubbornness of those, both above and below, in this part of the world makes us insensitive to the pollution and destruction of the environment that man, in his search for development, is generating here, right at our door-step. We are making dead seas of what were once flourishing breeding grounds of fish and prawn, and for that very reason, veritable sources of pleasure and delight because of the very presence of life therein. The Lunawa lagoon, said to be now stacked with industrial waste, is a good example. It is a good example of misguided industrial expansion. I stress here the word misguided because whether in the private sector or at state level these developmental ventures must be launched after careful deliberation and

counselling. Bypassing instruction, and even danger signals, primarily in the interests of personal gain has been witnessed too often in Sri Lanka, and that far beyond a point of annoyance.

This approach to the question of development necessarily sets limits on all sides. But it must be admitted that limits are and have to be a *sine qua non* of all development, for that is the guarantee, on the one hand, for efficiency and perfection in the very process of development and on the other, against injury to human life and pollution and contamination of the environment. It must now be emphatically stated that whether here or there, any launching of development projects, without accepting responsibility for the consequences that come in their wake, i.e. without any reference to what in cultured societies of rulers or the ruled are called value judgements, is virtually a move in the direction of genocide. At the level of world thinking today, whether the killing or destruction is of human life or animal life or whether the destruction results in death or near death, the social scientists are inclined to hold the policy planners responsible for these mass manoeuvres. Let us, these wise men we are, not forget this level of thinking. Therefore any development policy, the planning of which results in the deterioration of the life of man and the environment in which he lives, or eventually leads to the deterioration of his cultural considerations, has to be conscientiously condemned and rejected even though such a line of action is known to rip the pockets of a few who are determined to make the money and benefit at the expense of the many. Is any country or any group of people by duty bound to oblige and support an underworld of this kind?

Let us here take an example. Whether it is the lack of concern or the reluctance to prevent the digging up of the coral belt around the southern shores of Sri Lanka or the raping of the island's forest cover including the Sinharaja range, or the diabolically planned or unplanned increase in the production and consumption of alcohol in the country, all these carry an element of viciousness, a death-dealing sting embedded in the development conscience. Are we to



forgive the pioneers and policy makers for these lapses simply because they have placed the telescope on the blind eye? Whether one directly perceives it or not, the pernicious effects of such actions on the country and the people are neither to be lost sight of nor treated lightly.

I attempt in this essay to indicate as to what should be the bed-rock of a development consciousness in Buddhism. Its primary motivation has to be humanitarian and that too essentially in the direction of magnanimous collective welfare, thus all the time leaving no room for the overgrowth of egoistic promptings of individuals or of groups, however large or small. This has to be the true social scientist's attitude of concern for the good of the vast majority of people: *bahuno janassa atthaya hitaya sukhaya* as the Buddhist texts put it. This thoroughly humanistic approach in determining the correctness or otherwise of man's activities is clearly witnessed in the Buddha's advice to his own son Rahula, saying that approval for action depends entirely on the goodness or otherwise of the results of such activity undertaken. One is called upon to ask the question Does such action have good results on oneself or on others? One has to probe into this aspect very carefully: *paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā kammaṃ kattabbaṃ* [MN. I. 415].

This being the Buddhist attitude to activity, in any form, any where and every where, the concept of development must be viewed and examined with sanity and with a down-to-earth realism. Injury to another, man, animal or nature, in any conjured up vision of development, cannot be permitted. This is not merely a religious consideration. At least Buddhism as a religion, does not subordinate man to the divine or subordinate nature to man. Nothing is created for the specific purpose of consumption by man. That is too primitive a belief of only eat and live. Each has its own rightful place and it is their healthy and correct co-ordination which leads to successful growth and development of the collective total group. The sane world today is becoming aware of it and accepting it in principle. The ozone belt above the earth, adequate forest cover on land, and

many such others are vital considerations for our own existence on this earth. Let not development ventures in their warped and distorted patterns ride rough-shod over the peace and happiness of man on earth.

Anything contrary to this, by whatever name one calls it, development or any other, and no matter by whom these processes are started, have to be challenged and rejected, at least for the survival of man on earth, if not for anything else. It can be done and has been done by men of courage and sanity in many parts of the world and many a great catastrophe has been averted. Let those obsessed with ambitious plans of development take serious note of this warning. It is written on the wall.

*Yāvadeva anathāya nāttam bālassa jāyate.*

Dhp. v.72.

Knowledge born to the fool  
would invariably stand to bring about  
his utter ruin and destruction.

## Section Four - Governance

### Lesson 17

#### Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is obviously still deluded under the old world myth, imported from the west, that Religion and State have nothing in common and therefore should stand apart. This myth needs to be exploded. Sooner the better. In 1994, the Oxford University Press, Chicago, brought out its epoch making publication - RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson. The very title of the book expresses enough.

The outcome of this book may be new thinking for the English speaking western world. But it is a very vibrant theme, well known to the Buddhists for well over twenty-five centuries. The Buddha laid this down as a remedial measure to tottering states of anaemic rulers. Buddhism expects rulers of countries in political distress to go to religious men in the land who are known to be keen on their spiritual growth and are steadily applying themselves to their own religious culture and to ask them as to what they should do in order to enhance the weal and welfare of the land and its people. The rulers are required to change their state policy accordingly.

This is where Buddhism promptly steps in to admonish rulers to seek the advice of serious and sincere religious men, and act accordingly in times of political crisis or collapse of governments [See Cakkavatti-sihanāda Sutta, DN. III. 61]. A state cannot be run by sheer brute force or craftiness and cunning, operated openly or secretly. Such supportive power for unstable governments may be generated and sustained by ambitious religious groups from distant lands or nearby camps lying underground. Equally well, such powerful machinery is

also often set in motion by completely alien political ideologies who keep a regular eye on world conquest. Examples of such unholy secretive moves are too well known in the world today, exhibiting very near shameless nudity.

It is by no means surprising that Sri Lanka has had a remarkable history dating back to more than twenty-three centuries, exhibiting both the possibility and reality of a healthy alliance between religion and the state. According to reliable Sri Lankan historical records, within three days of the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, King Devānaṃpiya Tissa is said to have requested Thera Mahinda who brought the new religion to the island at the request of Emperor Asoka to include his royal residence within the ecclesiastical boundaries [*sīmā*] of the monastic community [*Sambuddhāṇāya anto'haṃ vasissāmi jutindhara*. Mhv. Ch. XV. v. 172], meaning that he wished to dwell under the jurisdiction of the Buddha. This is perhaps the earliest indication in the world by the ruler of a land, of the desirability of bringing the state within the reach of the benign influence of religion.

This is at least three centuries before the commencement of the Christian era. Early Buddhist literature, dating back to yet another three hundred years, knows of a vibrant imperial tradition where we are told that the legendary Universal Monarch called the Righteous Cakkavatti King [*Dhammiko Dhamma Rājā*] who is presented as an unassailable model for good governance, and who tells all the provincial rulers who come to him from all the four quarters of the earth as voluntary subordinates seeking political counsel, as to how to rule their territories, that they should establish good morality, i.e. public relations, among their people as the foundation of their political administration which includes five different areas of human relationships [DN. II. 173f. Also DN. III. 61].

The first of these insist on the right of people for the security of their lives, i.e. the right of people to live without any threat to their lives, either from the state or from private individuals within it. This ranks as item No.1 of the Fundamental Human Rights sponsored by the United Nations in very recent times. Today it is

virtually on the rocks, when it comes to issues of whether to wage war or not to wage war. It is the right of persons to live their lives in peace and comfort, without threats from any religion, ethnic group or political creed. As item No. 2, the Cakkavatti lists the right of persons or groups to own their legitimately acquired possessions.

The right of women for their own independent existence, without undue subordination to men and without sex violence of any sort, pre-marital, marital or extra-marital. This ranks clearly as item No.3 under these fivefold ethics of Buddhism. The world today is gradually getting sensitised on this issue. And this is only after the almost impossible has happened all around us. Without a reasonable degree of honesty in word and deed, individual as well as collective, no segment of society can reliably be run. Theft, cheat and dishonesty in the human community utterly stink, whether in the home, society or within governments, often carried on with the connivance of one another. These are regularly witnessed all around us, almost from anywhere and everywhere. They corrode from within and institutions cave in disastrously. This sense of honesty amidst humans ranks as No. 4.

Loss of saner judgement of humans through intake of alcohol and drugs is severely frowned upon in this context. Both the psycho-ethical as well as the socio-economic disasters which addiction to alcohol and drugs brings about are discussed at great length in Buddhist texts. What begins as a social trimming, adding as it were to the glamour and grandeur of life of both men and women in lay society, singly or collectively, is shown to be invariably ending up in socio-economic explosions, in addition to the severe health hazards it brings about. Thus this comes to be item No. 5 and the final one on which the Universal Monarch advises his vassals while instructing on the governance of their states. This is the scope and content of Buddhist *pañca-sīla*.

Once the moral goodness of the state is guaranteed on the basis of these five fundamental principles which are none other than the injunctions of the

*pañca-sīl*

a, the Universal Monarch shows no more interest in restructuring the political set up of those territories. That, to him, is of no primary concern. Carry on the administration of your lands as you have done before [*Yathā bhuttañ ca bhuñjatha*], he tells the provincial rulers who come to him, seeking political counsel.

These are just five items of moral injunction, for adherence to at down-to-earth level, here on earth. They demand no loyalties to any religious creed, to any super powers above or below, theistic or otherwise. They leave alone the heavens above where they are, without any fear of punishment from there. The humans have no more need to fear any retributive punishments for any infringements on them. Buddhism calls such lapses fears inflicted by man on man [*pañca - bhayāni*]. This is the minimum that humanity is called upon to give to humanity as reciprocal obligations. Each cannot behave arrogantly towards humanity in his or her own way, judging others on ones own norms and asking finally, in crisis situations, a god above to help us all.

Good governments have to be of the people, for the people, by the people, not a few using force all the time, as known the world over, with unjust violence at times, to rule over others. Governments must share a spirit of co-operation with the people whom they govern. That is why Buddhism looks upon the breach of any of the injunctions of the *pañca-sīla* as a dread, threat or challenge hurled at society. Not as a sin against powers above. In such instances, breaches of *pañca-sīla* are called five-fold dreads or *pañca- bhayāni* from the angle of society, i.e. of instances of the society being menaced. Such miscreants, as individual or groups, who bring about such situations are called social villains [*dussīla*, i. e. those who are lacking in moral goodness]. On the other hand, such persons are also branded as enemies of society, who perish within themselves, with five-fold enmities [*pañca- verāni*] towards society. So Buddhism does preach for a kingdom of man on earth first, prior to aspiring for a kingdom of God

hereafter.

In the light of what has been said so far it becomes clear that Buddhist teachings endeavour to help man to make the world he lives in a better place for everybody who lives here, man and bird and beast [*Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* = May all beings dwell in peace and comfort. Sn. v. 145]. In the name of any power-granting authority, from any where, none shall through religious dogmas or political creeds dominate or ride rough shod over another. In the exercise of such sectarian favours from above, there shall be no sense of justice which can be upheld anywhere. It shall be no more than the law of the jungle, where might is right. It is time we call a halt to this.

In the governance of a country, Buddhists begin with respect for life, the right of every living thing to live, without any threat to its continuance. This refers both to humans and animals, equally well. A Buddhist ruler who must necessarily govern the country in consonance with the Buddhist *dhamma* [*dhammaṃ sakkaronto ... DN. III. 61*] has to provide security of living to every grade of life, starting from the royal household and the armed forces, down to all people in the land, including birds and beasts [*rakkhāvaraṇaguttiṃ saṃvidahassu antojanasmiṃ balakāyasmīṃ khattiyesu anuyuttesu brāhmaṇa-gahapatikesu negama-jānapadesu samaṇa-brāhmaṇesu miga-pakkhīsu. loc. cit.*].

There is ethics in it, unless blurred by the human folly of ethno-religious fanaticism which mankind, everywhere in the world today, seems to continually pump into themselves. Notions of divine sanctions [fashioned more by man for his own benefit than heaven-granted] and legendarily generated notions of heavenly favoured chosen people, claiming for themselves this part of the earth or that, have stupefied the mortals who people this earth to massacre and devastate their own brethren, of not very different flesh and blood. Animals too, it must be remembered in the saner and more science-conscious world today, are an integral part and parcel of the entire ecosystem. They have to continue to exist and not be made part and parcel of the eating material of mankind, in spite

of believed-to-be religious sanctions to the contrary, with the rest for the harmonious continuance and the survival of the totality.

If in terms of religious beliefs there was only one father in heaven, can this divisive aggressiveness of religions or of different geographical regions ever be justified? There must certainly be numerous angry and jealous and equally blood-thirsty gods above and their enslaved agents below, encamped in far different and distant geographical locations. Down below here, we hapless but ambitious humans are only upholding an unknown third party to arbitrate in our favour, in our petty tribal wars. We must now learn to face its reality. Let religions encourage peace in the world we live in and not drive us to war in terms of heavenly requirements. Ethno-religious loyalties in any and every part of the world have, throughout history, proved to be more a curse than a blessing on mankind. Even among religious sub-groups, there have been occasions of prompting for ruthless massacres. Unquestionable evidence is being surfaced day after day, even among those who vociferously claim universal brotherhood during prayer times.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhism as the religion of the demographically vast majority of the people, has been the predominant religion for over twenty-three centuries. At the time of its arrival in the island, it is reported that minority groups like the Damilas, headed by their religious leaders or representatives like Brahmin Tivakka, as reported in the Mahāvamsa, joyfully participated in Buddhist activities like the planting at Anurādhapura of the young Bodhi tree gifted from India. The ethno-religious venom of later centuries and later generations [a fact and no fiction] which prompts the alien minorities to axe, with ruthless violence and vulgarity, every Bodhi tree which they see near or far, had not even showed itself up, let alone develop its intensity.

At that time of the arrival of Buddhism, and that a long time ago, the Sri Lankans were a happy-go-lucky people, ruled by a just and generous king. Astronomically-worked-out festival days were a common occurrence. The full-



moon day of the month of June was such a one when the king had commanded the commoners to enjoy themselves in water sports in the great lake Tisā Wewa in Anurādhapura and himself went with his retinue on his regular annual deer-hunt. The full moon day of the month of June appears to have had no religious associations linked with it in Sri Lanka prior to the arrival of Thera Mahinda in the island. Little had the king realised that his friend Emperor Asoka of India who was dispatching a Buddhist mission to this country through his own son Thera Mahinda had already as a Buddhist even ordered a reduction in the slaughter of animals for the royal kitchen.

Devānampiya Tissa's own participation in the royal deer-hunt on this festival day, with no cultural antecedents guiding him, turned out to be too obvious a contradiction in his own life style. He soon made the rulers and the people of this country to be sensitised on this issue of respect for animal life. Within two hundred years, kings of Sri Lanka like Āmaṇḍagāmaṇi Abhaya, Silākāla, Aggabodhi IV and Mahinda III, all repeatedly imposed the *mā ghāta* or No Slaughter order in the island, banning the slaughter of animals, birds and fish [*Mā ghātaṃ kārayi dīpe sabbesaṃ yeva pāṇinaṃ*. Mhv. XLI. v. 30].

In the alternative, consumption of fruits was popularised. More and more fruits like sweet melons [*maṃsa-kumbhaṇḍaka*] came to be widely grown in the land. Even Buddhist monks are said to have been encouraged by the rulers in this direction to promote this cause. Here is how the Mahāvaṃsa details out some of the activities of Āmaṇḍagāmaṇī Abhaya in his leanings towards vegetarianism in the land.

*Māghātaṃ sakale dīpe kāresi manujādhipo  
vallīphalāni sabbāni ropāpetvā tahiṃ tahiṃ  
maṃsakumbhaṇḍkaṃ nāma Āmaṇḍiya mahīpatī  
pattaṃ pūrāpayitvāna kāretvā vattha-cumbaṭaṃ  
dāpesi sabbasaṅghassa vipasannena cetasā  
patte pūrāpayitvā so Āmaṇḍagāmaṇī vidū*

Mahāvamsa xxxv. vv. 6 - 8

That even fish, birds and beasts [*macchānaṃ miga-pakkhīnaṃ ... kattabbaṃ sabbaṃ ācari*. Mhv. Ch. xlviii. v. 97] came under the loving care [*kattabbaṃ sabbaṃ ācari*. Ibid] of a king like Sena I is undoubtedly owing to the benevolent influence of Buddhism.

For this generous security and protection provided for the dumb and silent population of the land or miga-pakkhisu [*rakkhāvaraṇa-guttiṃ saṃvidahati miga-pakkhīsu*] the ruler was not to receive back anything by way of state revenue. It was not repayable in cash or kind. But the Buddhists were made to know from the earliest beginnings of their creed that the contribution it made to the ecological balancing in the world we live in is more than compensating. This was what the good king Cakkavatti [*dhammiko dhammarājā*] was expected to do. The most advanced scientific thinking on environmental studies today supports this thesis. Those who make policies with a sense of sincerity for the good governance of countries they serve do need to peep into modern scientific studies like Biophilia Hypothesis [Ed. by Stephen R. Kellar and Edward Wilson, Island Press, 1993].

A king like Aggabodhi seems to have carried even further the implementing of his religiousness as a Buddhist ruler. He even banned the bringing in of fish, meat and alcohol into the royal city where he dwelt on the days of the uposatha [i.e. the four days of religious observance in the month]. A regular practice of religion was both to be observed personally by a ruler and also its observance enforced in the land.

*Pavesaṃ vinivāresi uposathadīnesu so  
maccha-maṃsa-surādīnaṃ antonagaram attano.*

Mahāvamsa - Buddhadatta Thera. Ch. xlvii. v. 48

This is what made the historical traditions of Sri Lanka insist that a ruler of that land must necessarily be a Buddhist. The Sinhala had to guard what was in

their hands now. This does by no means imply that the Sinhala of Sri Lanka ever assumed that Buddhism is the monopoly of the Sinhala or that Buddhism does not exist outside Sri Lanka. Far from it. It is more than absurd even to insinuate such a thing. Such talk is utter political topsy-turviness. All that they were keen on doing was to safeguard what was their legitimate property and prevent it from falling into the hands of the vandals. They have already had, as indicated above, a glimpse of the possible calamitous situation towards which they were heading, then and now, with their own eyes. Once bitten, twice shy.

Sri Lankans, by all counts including demographic considerations, had to meticulously guard their religion and their culture. It was vital that the ruler of the land was also the defender of the faith of the people. So it was decreed that the ruler of the land had to be a Buddhist. This was a concept that grew very naturally within Sri Lanka from the very introduction of Buddhism to the island in the third century B.C. By about the 10th century, they even pushed it further and insisted that the ruler of the land had to be a Bodhisatta, i. e. a Buddha aspirant. The Jetavanārāma slab inscription of Mahinda IV [956 - 972 A.D.] proclaims that "none but the Bodhisattvas would become kings of Sri Lanka" and that they "received this assurance - *viyāraṇ* - from the omniscient Buddha." [History of Buddhism in Ceylon by Walpola Rahula, p. 62]. This is nothing but the totality of cultural experience growing into the very life of a nation. No violence can alienate this from a people. Nor is there any need for it.

The Mahāvamsa tries all its ingenuity to make us believe the Damila king Elāra endeavoured to rule like a Buddhist. But we are also convinced that it is his failure to live up to those expectations of the vital tradition of the land as a true defender of the faith that brought about his disastrous end in the hands of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī who had to come on the scene in time. We know we find its ancient parallel in China in the 'handing over of the silk scarf to the Emperor' when the ruler proves to be not equal to the task and his rule has to be drastically ended.

Finally, in an endeavour to restore to Sri Lanka a wholesome spirit of religiousness in the governance of the people under sensibly restrained rulers, particularly in the face of the catastrophic failure of current political ideologies of the present and previous centuries, coupled with their religio-ethnic overtones, we in Sri Lanka feel the need to look back and scan our achievements of over two millennia of our pre-colonial history. We had better leave alone the destructive devastation we Sri Lankans have suffered under the colonial regimes.

All people of the land, men, women and children, irrespective of their ethno-religious differences, must make up their mind, to call upon all those who have a say in the governance of the land as men or women, to bring in a far greater degree of respect for the lives of men, women and children of the land. At the crudest and the shabbiest, it is just brutal murder on the basis of differences of political convictions and political activism. For several decades in Sri Lanka, this has been going on, pre-election and post-election, both by the winners and the losers, with unfailing regularity. Every succeeding season sees it repeated with amazingly far greater skill and ferociousness. It is as though the miscreants are not of terrestrial origin. They are never arrested, prosecuted or punished. They are invariably planted and guarded by super powers, divine or diabolic or by whatever polluted name one calls them.

Environmentally conscious, this love and respect for life must necessarily extend much further. With due respect to scientific fore-warnings, this respect for the entire ecosystem must stretch over both plant and animal as well. With no Biophilia Hypothesis ever getting near a publishing house in this country, kings of Sri Lanka upheld a policy not much less in content, when they protected the birds, the beasts and the fish in the land [*macchānaṃ miga-pakkhīnaṃ*. Mhv. Ch. xlviii. v. 47].

This respect for all grades of life being assured by truly cultured rulers and their benevolent governments, let us now turn to the attitude of those who govern towards the women of the land. From its very inception, Buddhism has upheld

the very noble and esteemed position the woman holds both in the home and the family. On this unsurpassable familial role, it is gratifying to note that even the Hindu law book, the Manusmṛti, which often lays down harsh and arbitrary rulings on the fate of woman in society. gives her this rightful place [Manu Ch. IX. V. 96]. It is said that by virtue of her being the progenitor of children, [*Prajananārthaṃ striyah sṛṣṭāh*], an equal law has been laid down in society for man along with his wife [*Tasmād sādharmaṇah dharmah saha patnyā udīritah*].

Not unaware of the perils to which women are exposed when they are allowed unqualified and unconditional departure to so-called affluent countries to enhance their monetary bargaining powers back home, Sri Lanka has possibly earned the position No.1 as degrading our womanhood to the lowest depths of prostitution and the allied forms of moral degeneracy. We are told of countless health hazards to which they are exposed. Legal action, both harsh and cruel, against them by authorities in the lands to which they have gone in search of fortunes knows no limits of mercy.

In an early Buddhist text [Anguttara Nikāya II. p. 82], we discover a very interesting remark relating to this question of women going abroad to earn money [to enhance the family income [*dhana-samharaṇatthāya*]. An adequately sharp note of warning about this issue is found in the Anguttara Nikaya where it is said that there are three areas of activity where women do not generally engage themselves in, or better say, should act with adequate caution. For various reasons, their aptitude and temperament is said to be not equal to the task.

The relevant issue here is that mātuḡāmo neva kambojaṃ gacchati. This means that a woman does not go to Kamboja. [PTS text misreads it as *kammoja*]. It is beyond doubt that the correct textual reading should be *Kambojam*. The Commentary to this text explains this statement vividly saying that women should not go to distant foreign lands [*dūre tioraṭṭham*] for the sake of collecting money [*dhana-samharaṇatthāya*]. Further, the Commentary adds a reason for dissuading women from going overseas, saying that the males in

those regions are violent and impulsive. Please note that the word *kammoja* is a disastrous editorial error in the text [AN.II. 1888 p.83] .

This incorrect reading *kammojaṃ*, through editorial mishandling, has led the PTS translator [Gradual Sayings II, 1952, p.92] to making an unpardonable doctrinal error in rendering it as "women do not reach the essence of the deed." To say this in the context of Buddhist teachings that religious experience is different in the case of women as against men is blasphemous. To miss such points of sociological significance in Buddhist teachings, quite apart from attainment of transcendental goals like Nirvana, reflects the poverty of Buddhist scholarship, both of the monk and the layman, whether in the east or in the west. Where religion comes into play, as it should really be, in the governance of an essentially Buddhist country, it should be the role of Buddhist scholarship, both monk and layman, to clarify and indicate to those in power as to wherein lie their strength and power.

Back home as it does really happens day after day, in the absence abroad of the income gathering wives, the ruination of family life of husbands, children and others brings about untold miseries. And quite often eternal damnation, including psychopathic disturbances to most remaining members of the families. Rulers of the country, whether male or female, should be sensitive enough to apprehend these disasters. Many of our more sensible neighbouring countries have banned this female slave trade. This should neither be private economic enrichment for the individuals concerned nor a booster to the national economy of the State. Policy makers in this country who sit comfortably curtained off behind these moves must necessarily face brimstone and hell fire for their crimes.

Another very serious area in the lives of females in Sri Lanka today is the alarmingly escalating rate of sex violence in the land, both in the town and the village, as well as in the home and the work-place. It knows of no differences with regard to its violence and atrocity, neither in terms of the location of crimes, nor the age group of persons involved, not even with regard to the social gradations

of either the criminals or their victims. While school going boys and girls of all social grades seem to be involved in this free for all pattern of wild sex behaviour, even men who are fairly well advanced in the process of ageing, seem to be scandalously caught up at times in such activities, quite often with the shameless connivance of partners who are willing to share. Early Buddhist texts like the Vasala Sutta, apprehend such behaviour and condemn them in no uncertain terms [*Sahasā sampiyena vā taṃ jaññā vasalo itī* = Whosoever indulges in such behaviour, either by force or with connivance, shall be known as a despicable villain or *pariah*. Sn, v. 123].

It is in such situations like these that dharma in the religiousness of good governance, either in the persons who preside at the top or in the policy of state, should be harnessed to retrieve acceptable patterns of decent behaviour. Buddhist dharma carefully pinpoints all the disasters that come in the wake of such licentious behaviour like the riddance of unwanted babies through abortion in the hands of unscrupulous medical practitioners who, in many parts of the world have had to pay with their lives for the crimes they do, wrecked marriages and single-parent homes, and painful and less honourable termination of lives in instances of STD and Aids. No well-meaning wreaths at their grave-sides will ever relieve them of the burden and the stigma they have, of their own choice, gathered and taken upon themselves.

Among the major items of stench which bring unquestionable world-wide accusations against our land of Sri Lanka which we have listed so far, proneness to alcohol and drugs is by no means the least degrading and damaging. This is an offence unmistakably forbidden as the fifth item of the *pañca-sīla* of the Buddhists. Its corrosiveness in the social and economic sectors as well as its possibly being a serious health hazard [*rogānaṃ āyatanaṃ*] are clearly highlighted in the well known Sigāla Sutta and its Commentary [DN.III.182 and DA. III.945].

It is our deep conviction that if Sri Lanka is to be governed with any sense of

acceptable decency, by anybody at any time, it must be remembered that it is a land with a predominantly Buddhist population [still not far removed from 70 %] which has an amazingly rich cultural heritage, dating back to nearly twenty three centuries. Over the centuries, historians both of the east and the west have very generously written about this. This remarkable blend of religious culture and political sagacity has never been known elsewhere, east or west. This has very naturally grown into the national genius of the people, both physically and mentally. Erstwhile colonial rulers who ruled this island country for centuries as non-Buddhists, have often admitted this ungrudgingly.

We could ill-afford to get this culture in which we Sri Lankans have grown up over a period of more than two millennia eroded or corroded. The world as a whole would be the losers thereby. That we preserve and safeguard only places of archaeological interest and dilapidated monuments therein as world heritage would be no more than mere mockery, if the spirit which they are meant to breathe to the living world would not be safeguarded. They deliver a message to be examined, evaluated and accepted [or rejected on their own intrinsic worth.]. There is no denying that Buddhism has globally stood the test of time. No matter in which part of the world Buddhism has had its origin, it must be preserved as an item of world heritage.

We now return to the last item in our present list of requests we make to the ruling powers in the island, no matter who they would turn out to be, by the elective power of people or by the intervention of gods [above and below]. In either case, they are morally bound to serve, first and foremost, the safe and secure continuance of man on earth. Our request now is to the state to intervene to reduce and totally eliminate the addiction and proneness of the people of the land to the devastating consumption of alcohol and their addiction to drugs. It is now allowed to be a source of ceaseless income to bands of unscrupulous business tycoons

As to the origin of this currently prevalent menace in the land, everybody



here, the rulers, the police, the judiciary and the citizens of the land, they all know a great deal more than the ABC of the story. Those at the very top choose to be silent. Others, for obvious reasons, are silenced. As to who brings drugs here, from where it comes, and who does the trafficking in it, these are all too well known. Even as to who turns a deaf ear and a blind eye. But why does not somebody step in to arrest this crime wave and the consequent decay. Each one seems to be bound by the private ethics of his or her political groupings.

In other countries, even the police dogs are utilised to be active and they serve very well on their job of crime detection. They are trusted to be capable of doing their job unquestionably well. Ministries of State, world over, like those of health, we know for certain, make direct orders to the governments to take necessary corrective action when the nation faces health hazards. We do still vividly remember, in the year 1994, how Joslyn Elders, the Chief Surgeon in the USA at the time, when she discovered the alarmingly increasing rate of hospitalisation in that country of males [49 %] and of females [43 %] was alcohol related, immediately ordered that the government increases the price of alcohol in the land. We were eye witnesses to this act of sanity and determined action on the part of those who rule the land with a commendable sense of sanity.

By now we have said enough about the moral and spiritual degeneracy of our people now evident in the land. It swings this way primarily because of the ignorance of the people of the values their respective religions have imparted to them. The major religions of the land, no matter what their identities are, if they are to be worthy of the pedestals on which they stand and claim power, prestige and popularity, have to courageously come forward to undertake this cleansing job, and present to the people vibrantly new emphatic teachings, with a relevance to their day to day life. And not merely conduct supplicatory services on behalf of soulless adherents who have been robbed of their religious vibrancy.

A total respect for life at all levels, whether of humans or animals, must be enforced. This is quite a loud cry which now comes soaring high right across the

globe, breaking through religious barriers, from Australia in the east to USA in the west. Whether it is Professor Peter Singer of Australia with his *Save Animals and Animal Liberation*, or Frances M. Lappe with her *Diet For A Small Planet* or Jeremy Refkin with his *Beyond Beef*, their resonance is the same. They break through all stratified religious dogmas, and appeal to the sanity and magnanimity of human judgement [of mankind] at a very realistically down-to-earth level to treat life on this planet as part of an integrated whole, whether created or evolved into existence.

Decency of behaviour among men and women, whether young or old, elite or rustic, must be restored. Gender relations are to be viewed with honour and respect. Love and sexuality must necessarily be separated. Human sanity and good judgement must not be merrily sacrificed at the social elitist altar of alcohol and drugs. All religions must join hands in clearly defining their boundaries, leaving no room for vulgarisation for trade purposes.

Today we are in the fourth year of the third millennium. It is 2004. It is not a day too early for the major religions of the world and the living philosophies to meet together, and possibly not leaving out the vibrant thinking psychologists as well, to plan for and undertake this massive sweep which the world needs very badly today. Not merely for the dominance of any single religion across the globe. There can be many resisting power blocks, both religious and political. But somebody must speak up for such themes among the humans as delay gratification, sex is worth waiting for, ageing and sageing about which we have said so much so far. These are only some of the gems we dispassionately pick up at world level, from our friends in the world around, irrespective of their religious creeds, even as far distant as Australia and the USA., not to speak of other equally sensible groups lying in between.

Lesson 18  
The Preservation and Fostering  
of the Buddhist Heritage  
in Sri Lanka  
Historical Introduction

We are fairly certain that the Buddhists as well as the non-Buddhists of the world today are unlikely to make the mistake of looking for the heritage of Buddhism in the age-old pagodas or the dilapidated monasteries of Asia or even in Sri Lanka. Thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of Emperor Asoka, the message of Buddhism was well known outside India within a few centuries after the passing away of the Buddha.

Archaeological evidence like monuments and works of art are the outward manifestation of a more inward process of cultural growth of humans. The heritage of a people, particularly in relation to Buddhism, is to be sought essentially in the life and thought of those who constitute such a grouping. As the men and women think, so do they judge and act, leaving for posterity the products of their thinking and acting, for their weal or for their woe. It is no exaggeration to say that the main target of Buddhism was the regulation of human thinking for the preservation of the entire world which the humans inhabit.

This process of willing and thinking moves in both directions of being constructive and destructive, wholesome or unwholesome. Such behavior may be witnessed at global level as invasions by one set of people of lands of others which have been the legitimate possessions of those who have owned them over the ages. They are also reflected in senseless defensive structures put up by big power blocks in the world, these today being nothing less than brutal atomic challenges by even rowing up smaller nations whose very existence is being threatened. They inevitably carry with them a devastating potential, giving proof

of human arrogance and foolhardiness.

But when the Buddha, more than twenty-five centuries ago, sent out his first band of sixty arhants or the enlightened disciples to go into the world and work for mankind, the injunction was that they work for the weal and welfare of mankind, for the good and benefit of many, including gods and men. It was not prompted by an expansionist attitude of conquest by conversion, with or without violence. At the heart of the Buddhist mission has always been the welfare of mankind, whoever they be or wherever they be.

### **Identification of Scope and Content**

Buddhism's basic policy, via its religious direction, is first to maximize the healthy and harmonious acquisition of all that is needed to make human life, at its very down to earth level both physically and mentally, comfortable and pleasant. This in fact does cover all beings, both human and non-human. Hence its recurrent theme 'May all beings be well and happy' [*Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*. Sn. v. 145]. This, we would unhesitatingly declare, as 'the living ethic' of Buddhism which is basically required for the survival of life in the world. To us, this is the vital heritage of Buddhism which has been delivered to the world with such sensitivity and awareness. Out of this spirit also grow cultural and religious institutions which become its natural derivatives. It shall be our concern to talk about their preservation and fostering as well.

Humans are declared to be characteristically pleasure seekers [*sukha-kāmā*]. They are also said to be equally averse, by their very nature, to displeasure and discomfort [*dukkha-paṭikkulā*]. The world cannot, and must not turn its back on this principle. While death is declared in Buddhism to be more real than life, it is equally true that people still recoil from death or from being put to death. Therefore it is assumed that it is incumbent on humans to keep death and destruction of life, even in the animal world, at its farthest: One shall not destroy life nor get others to do so [*Na haneyya na ghātaye*. Dh. vv. 129-130].

This respect for life is undoubtedly the most fundamental feature of the Buddhist heritage which the Buddhists must stand up to uphold. As the impact of Buddhism came to be felt more and more on the life of Emperor Asoka of India, we see him increasingly practice this love towards animals. Not only the provision of sanctuaries for animals but even a reduction in the slaughter of animals for the royal kitchen is witnessed.

At the time Asoka sent his son Thera Mahinda to Sri Lanka with the message of Buddhism, Tissa who was the ruler at the time, was unfortunately caught on the wrong foot, going out on his pompous royal hunt to bag a deer. Unfortunately, he was at the time the ruler of a non-Buddhist Sri Lanka. It must have caused him no small amount of embarrassment to be caught red-handed in this stupid act by the Thera Mahinda, the emissary sent by his unseen friend Emperor Asoka, who arrived here with the Buddhism's message of love to all things both great and small. However, it did not take long in Sri Lanka for the turn of this tide. Generations of kings who succeeded Tissa, reflecting a remarkable cultural sensitivity, began to show consideration for life even of animals. Ban on the slaughter of animals or *mā ghāta* came to be imposed in the island from time to time.

Kings of Sri Lanka like Amandagāminī, Silākāla, Aggabodhi IV and Mahinda III, following this tradition of just kingship, ordered from time to time that no animals should be slaughtered, and set up veterinary hospitals for the treatment of sick animals. That even fishes, birds and beasts came under the loving care of a king like Sena I is undoubtedly owing to the benevolent influence of Buddhism. Sanctuaries for animals, including 'safe pools' for fish in rivers and lakes became a common sight in the land. This is to be viewed more as a magnanimous change of heart of the leadership of the state and a desirable change in the value systems of the land. It seems to make much less sense to view this [as some of our own Sri Lankan researchers at times have questioned] as a total imposition of vegetarianism or as leading, on the other hand, to malnutrition or economic

disaster.

They also seem to have held the view that it was too presumptuous to believe that man had exclusive rights over the land in which he lived, to the exclusion of fauna and flora. On the other hand, they believed that the fauna and flora not only had a right of their own but also contributed in no small measure to the total harmonious growth of the land on which they live. This ecological sensitivity and the respect man has for it, is the main stay which in the long run saves him from extinction.

To be in harmony with the world around us, both with the animate and the inanimate, is one of the principles advocated in Buddhism, in order that man may attain his fullest development within himself and also secure for himself the maximum degree of success and happiness in life out of the world in which he lives. And this latter, Buddhism insists, must be achieved without violence to anyone or anything, and at the same time fostering peace on earth and goodwill among men. It must be remembered by all, the rulers and the ruled, that within the framework of Buddhist thinking, no heavenly injunction, no matter from where they are delivered, shall do violence to this.

### **World Trends Today**

As we take into consideration this wide concept of the universe, we discover that life on earth has to be a co-operative process, based on the principle of inter-relatedness, not only of mutual assistance but also of mutual non-interruption and non-interference. This has to be so in order that serious imbalances and consequent destruction of parts or the whole might not be brought about. The scientists of the world today emphatically announce the disastrous movement of man, unwittingly though, in the direction of destroying the biota of the world we live in. Note what the men, whose thinking in the world matters, now have to say on this subject.

This philosophy of amity or friendship in Buddhism [i.e. *mettā* in Pali or *maitrī*

in Skt.] which is fully enunciated in the Metta Sutta of the Buddhists [Sn. *vv.*143-152 and Khp. p.8f.], brings within its fold all grades of life, of man and bird and beast, no matter how large or small they are. Seen or unseen, near or far, all life is encompassed within thoughts of loving kindness. In displeasure or in ill-will, one shall not long for or pray for the destruction of another. This is lamentably becoming the planned global policy in the world today, which is, more or less, being internationally approved and endorsed. With more or less maternal affection, one is called upon to look at life in the universe. This attitude to the world we live in is expected to pervade all areas of Buddhist life, both religious and secular.

The protagonists of the idea of biophilia hypothesis [See The Biophilia Hypothesis edited by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson 1993] whom we quote in our paper are laudably moving today in the same direction as espoused in Buddhism. But they cannot emphasise it any more than what their Sri Lankan predecessors have implicitly done more than a thousand years earlier. The contemporary stress on this kind of thinking, namely that the desire for the survival of man must go closely hand in hand with an equal degree of respect for the survival and well-being of the animal world around us is boldly reflected in the writings of today's philosopher-thinkers like Peter Singer [ a Professor of Philosophy at Monash University, Australia.]. One must co-operatively read with sympathy his Animal Liberation [1975, 1990] and his Save the Animals [co-authored with Barbara Dover and Ingrid Newkirk [1990,1991] to comprehend the total dimension of this line of thinking and to meaningfully relate it to the Buddhist concept of love or universal loving kindness which is conveyed in the concept of *mettā*.

This spirit of concern for the world we live in and the total content thereof, both animate and inanimate, is reflected today in many parts of the thinking world. Here is Frances Moore Lappe expressing a very candid opinion on this subject in her Diet for a Small Planet [Twentieth Anniversary Edition: November

1991 / Ballantine Books, New York].

'The change you and I witness in a lifetime now exceeds what in previous centuries transpired over many generations. And we who were born after World War II are the first to know that our choices count: They count on a global scale. They matter in evolutionary time. In our species' fantastic rush toward "modernization" we obliterate millions of other species, transfigure the earth's surface, and create climate-changing disruption of the upper atmosphere, all powerfully altering the path of evolution.'

More recently we discovered Jeremy Riffkin writing on this same theme in his book which is amazingly titled BEYOND BEEF, and even more meaningfully subtitled Breakdown of the Cattle Culture.

### **A New Awareness Around Us**

We have brought together here these brief observations from many cultures and many continents to show the contemporary trend in the world today to respect, without any reservation, all forms of life in the universe. This is happening today without any distinctions of religious creeds, partialities or prejudices, primarily motivated by a long term awareness of its need for man's survival on this planet. The philosophers and scientists of the world are unanimously agreed that this awareness of the need to respect life must widely spread among the humans who are the chief miscreants in the gamble for destruction of life. For the humans have been far too long obsessed with their self-assumed superiority over the rest of the world which they believe has been created for them.

Having put forward what might be termed the Buddhist point of view with regard to respectful and peaceful co-existence with all components of life which constitute life in the universe as a whole, we wish to indicate to the Buddhists how the current trends in scientific and philosophical thinking in the world today are closely supportive of this Buddhist stand, perhaps even without a direct



awareness of Buddhism.

### **A World-wide Sensitivity**

It is well known to all Buddhists and to all students of Buddhism, and we expect that it should be so too, that the spiritual build up of Buddhism, at least in the Theravada tradition, consists of three ascending tiers, each rising above the other. They are gradual and graduated, we insist, one following the preceding one. One cannot bypass or jump the other.

These are very serious considerations for everyone who wishes to practice Buddhism as a religion or way of life. Of these, the very rock bottom base is the cultivation of harmonious inter-personal relationships among all who constitute life in the universe, whether human, animal or even below. This is what is broadly labeled as *sīla* or moral rectitude or social propriety. The decadence and degeneracy of the world, we are sorry to say, has sunk so low that we are not at all sure whether such a concept does even exist in our midst today.

Man seems to destroy life through his greed for what he believes to be his personal survival. This is the calculated process of destruction through large scale rearing of cattle for meat, hide and other needs. In this process, he little realizes that he is destroying the chances of survival on this planet of every other being, including himself. This greed for personal need, and this we say emphatically together with the social philosophers of the day, is a totally misdirected and self-assumed need which blinds him to the world-wide destruction he brings upon mankind.

The sources we have already quoted above like Frances Moore Lappe, Peter Singer and Jeremy Riffkin, from different periods of time and from many different parts of the world, have established with more than adequate statistical evidence the folly of these endeavors of misguided economists and planners in the world. Those who plan merely on paper, sitting at their desks half-stupefied as it were, unmindful of the consequences of their paper work, have to be put today into the

same category as the men who planned the splitting up of the atom, unmindful of what could happen in Hiroshima.

Besides this massive global destruction of life to feed humans which has been successfully pointed out by saner men and women of greater sensibility to be a misguided foolish venture, there is also the largely organized killing of animals for industrial purposes. These include hunting of whales for oil, trapping of bears, foxes and others for furs and hunting down of elephants for ivory, to serve the interests of limited groups of elitists in the world. These are far too numerous to mention here.

## A Heritage to Preserve and Foster

### 1. Love and Respect for Life

In an endeavor to preserve and foster the Buddhist heritage, the cultural orientation of Buddhism must necessarily be the first move. In the name of Buddhism what do we wish to show as our Buddhistness and offer to the world? It has to be none other than the message of love of our great Master who is come down to us in world history as Buddha Gotama. Today, he is being referred to as Śākyamuni or the Sage of the Śākyans. This is how the whole Buddhist world including the Mahāyānists and the Vajrayānists now recognize him. It is undoubtedly this vision of love or maitrī which gives the future Buddha his name Maitreya [Japanese Miroku Bosatsu].

Direct towards the world  
the same degree of love  
you show yourself:

*Attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā.*

Dhp. v.129

Therefore kill not yourself  
nor bring about any killing:

*Na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Ibid.

In a Buddhist Sri Lanka, it should not need much tutoring to get this message across. This is where the religiousness of every Buddhist should necessarily begin. Out of the five basic precepts of the Buddhist *pañca-sīla*, the very first one begins with the restraint relating to destruction of life: *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*. This, we maintain, is the heritage worth preserving, worth fostering and passing down to posterity. Let us begin by reducing killing in this country to a minimum, whether for consumption or for export.

To the Buddhist, what matters is the killing, the destruction of a life, no matter who does it. Whether it is the lady of the house herself or the kitchen maid-maid through whom she gets it done, as in getting the live crabs bought from the fish-monger ready for the table. Or more distantly, patronizing the consumer-oriented meat market which works on a very sound economic principle of supply and demand - the more you consume, the more we supply. And we shall do the killing. The Suttanipāta, in the Dhammika Sutta, very judiciously indicates these three different areas within which humans indulge in the destruction of life for their own sensual gratification.

*Pāṇaṃ na hane na ca ghātayeyya  
Na cānujaññā hanataṃ paresaṃ.*

Sn. v. 394

One shall not kill any living thing,  
Nor shall he cause another to do so.  
Nor shall he approve of another doing so.

Translated by the author

The world as a whole is now convincingly pointing out that neither for the sake of more food for human consumption nor for the sake of more money for the state coffers, do humans need to go menacingly at the animal world. It seems more a bestial policy befitting life in the jungle than a civilized society of so-called humans marching in the direction of the twenty-first century.

## **2. Respect for the role of Woman in Society**

If Sri Lanka is to make any contribution to the cultural uplift of the world at this juncture, it has to be unequivocally stated that it has to be via the noble teachings of Buddhism. It must truly be discovered by the Buddhists much more than by the non-Buddhists, that the Buddhist heritage which we have inherited is a vast treasure house which can adequately meet numerous world needs of today.

In recent decades, the western world in particular, has begun to make global agitations about injustices done to women in various cultures, sometimes real and at others merely alleged and imaginary. Well over twenty-five centuries ago, the Buddha was well aware of these. Incidents of injustice generated against the female of the species in India were well known to the Buddha as a spiritual leader and consequently as a social reformer, he vociferously spoke for the redemption of woman both in religion and society. Evidence of this is vastly scattered in early Buddhist texts whose authenticity, thanks to the modern techniques of literary verification, is established beyond doubt.

As the feminist activist movement gathered momentum in many different parts of the world, both east and west, and even in Buddhist countries, prompted by various groups with diverse interests of their own, many protagonists with thoroughly inadequate credentials have joined in the fray. We regret to say, as far as Buddhism is concerned, we discover many enthusiasts with inadequate academic backgrounds dipping their heads into garbage bins, unable to distinguish between the real and the fake, the authentic and the unauthentic. They hang on to and quote as their primary sources, writers and 'researchers with a name and fame' whose findings we have challenged many a time and debunked as utterly misdirected. One good example is a writer who has made a name by declaring in one of his big books that 'Buddhism is not concerned with the virginity or chastity of woman because Buddhist monks, unlike the Hindu, do not actively participate at marriage ceremonies.'

We make no attempt here to enumerate these malicious and mischievous allegations or bring to book the miscreants who indulge in this kind of activity with fair regularity. This certainly has to be part of preserving the heritage of Buddhism and safeguarding it against unwarranted assaults. On our part, let us present to this distinguished audience just one or two instances of the remarkably courageous stand taken by the Buddha in his defense of the rights of women. They reveal to us the very low ebb of the tide to which the prestige of the

Indian woman had sunk around the time of the Buddha. In the Samyutta Nikaya, the Buddha advises King Pasenadi of Kosala, with a stern note of correction, that a woman with her intellectual, social and religious accomplishment gets far ahead of even her male companions. This is how he puts it:

*Itthī pi hi ekacciyā seyyā posā janādhīpa  
medhāvinī sīlavatī sassudevā patibbatā  
tassā yo jāyati poso sūro hoti disampati  
tādiso subharyā putto rajjam pi anusāsati.*

SN. I. 86

Some females, O King, are better than men.

If that girl be wise and virtuous,  
and is respectful of her in-laws,  
and remains faithful to her husband.

A boy born of such a woman  
shall be an efficient leader in the land.

Such a son of that fortunate girl  
shall even rule a kingdom.

Translated by the author

Here, the argument is more than a mere gender consideration of being man or woman. It is the accomplishment of each one, man or woman, as a social requirement. It is a collectivist attitude, not a separatist one, an attitude of having both men and women in society who can make a vital contribution to its well-being. Wisdom as a powerful tool of judgement [medhāvinī], accompanied by a sense of virtue or moral rectitude [sīlavatī] was as good then as it should be at any time now, today or tomorrow, anywhere in the world. Buddhist thinking, much more than anywhere else, embraces a wider area of societal wholesomeness.

It covers, for instance, the territory of the extended family. In-law relationships tend to be safeguarded thereby. A newly married girl is to be safely and respectfully related, reciprocally at the same time, to her husband's mother

and father [*sassu-devā*]. An honorable and dignified marital relationship of one man to one woman was the target of Buddhist society, well before the menace of aids crept into the world. Conjugal fidelity [*patibbatā*], whether the rest of the world likes it or not, was at a premium. This requires that in a Buddhist world, within what is intended to be a Buddhist heritage, all these attitudes towards the woman in society should be safeguarded and publicly upheld.

Thus the Buddhist attitude to the woman in society is more than evident here. In such a Buddhist context, let us see what really is the position of woman today, in the home and in the society, more than twenty-three centuries after the arrival of Buddhism in our land? These are the questions to which we must address ourselves as we prepare to talk of our heritage.

It is not a day too early for us to take stock of the situation of degradation of woman in society. Like the first plea we have already made for the respect for all life in the world which is now globally sponsored, so is this concern for the protection and upgrading of the status of woman. Buddhism advocates it and the state with fifty years of independence which now seems keen on preserving and fostering the heritage of Buddhism must step in forthwith. It is recorded in Sri Lanka, in our own stone inscriptions that about a thousand years ago, it was possible for a young girl to walk unmolested across the land from end to end, with a precious jewel in her hand. That, we say again, is our Buddhist heritage.

### **3. Safeguards for Sanity and Sobriety**

Psychologists and psychotherapists world over are now agreed on the need for mindfulness and awareness as powerful tools for the successful handling of cases of maladjusted human minds. The Buddha gave these two [*sati* and *sampajañña*] as two of the powerful bases of mental robustness. While therapists call upon individuals, both men and women, to develop these as means to stabilize their day to day living process, the world at large is viewing a formidable challenge to this requirement in the availability of a vast range of alcohol and drugs in our society, everywhere in the world. Whether countries are developed

or under-developed, drugs at world level have no difficulty in finding markets in these places. It is virtually a gold mine for some fantastic drug peddlers while it is death and social disruption to the rest of the human community.

The Buddha saw the danger in this loss of sanity and good judgement through drugs and alcohol. The much abused precept of *surā-meraya-majja-pamāda-tthānā veramanī sikkhā-padam* has been laid down as a safeguard against this menace of drugs and alcohol. Even the world today is becoming fully conscious of the ill effects of drugs and alcohol on humans. Many nations are imposing restrictions on the use of alcohol by young persons. Trafficking in drugs, in many countries, carry alongside with it the invariable death sentence.

We have now highlighted three areas which we hold, without any hesitation, as the major segments of our Buddhist heritage. These are what make humanity, at a global level, the wiser and richer. Fragments of our heritage are not to be raked out of the ground. Bricks and bits of stone are easily seen and identified by archaeologists, even amateur ones. But the spiritually and culturally valuable ones, embedded deep in what we cherish as the scriptural tradition, are less discernible even to the academics. To most of them, they do not provide enough of a bite to chew.

Buddhist lands all over Asia have made their modest contributions to the world in their own way. India, via China, has given the world Japanese Zen Buddhism which holds its own with much pride. Japanese Buddhism has also given the world *Ike bana* or the art of flower arrangement, through its zealous endeavor to honor the Buddha with flowers. The world has now learnt many forms of therapeutic meditation [for peace and tranquillity here and now] from Thailand, Burma and Tibet in addition to the totality of the Zen Buddhist tradition which stole a march over the western world very much earlier.

### **The much-needed Social Correctives today**

The world today is very conscientiously reaching out for new values on their



own, and we believe that these are very much in consonance with the values put forward by Buddhism more than two and a half millennia ago. The world's search for new meaningful values is continuing unabated.

It is this awareness of our Buddhist heritage which must come to the fore now, both as our prestigious contribution to the world and as a factor for our own survival in our own land. It is not being too pessimistic to say that we are on the brink of cultural annihilation.

To repeat here again, the components of this awareness should be:

1. The respect and love for all forms of life in the world, both human and animal, near and far, seen and unseen and of whatever magnitude they be. It is now continually being proved by men and women whose thinking and judgement matters, that this is a universal must.
2. An unquestioned respect and veneration for the role the woman plays in society for which she must and does continually qualify herself with the fullest cooperation of the society in which she lives. Both the state and the society, with the smaller units of the family within it, must courageously come forward to safeguard her rights. This is a very distinctly Buddhist stand with regard to feminist rights, put forward very specifically and courageously, well before the champions of today stepped forward to make a much belated start.
3. The need to alert the world community against today's widespread use of drugs and alcohol by persons of all ages, both male and female. Quite apart from their unquestionable health hazards, the consequent loss of judgement they bring about every instant, invariably shatters the moral norms of society. By the year 200 A.D. the Buddhists of Afghanistan had realistically accepted this and thought it fit to leave behind sermons on stone for the benefit of posterity. We have already referred to these above. The world at large too, has realized this today, and gives more thought to

the medical bills the governments have to pay on account of hospitalization through use of alcohol than to the gross income they earn through the state-sponsored sale of alcohol in the land.

Buddhism requires that rulers who govern countries must do so in conformity to the dhamma, and in consultation with those religious leaders of the land who seriously endeavor to culture themselves spiritually in terms of their dhamma. This advice of the latter is recommended to be undertaken by rulers, by whatever name they go, particularly in times of political crisis.

In the world today, religion is held to be a vital ingredient even in statecraft. This is being more and more accepted by thinking men and women of the English speaking world today. Forget not the 1994 publication of the Oxford University Press: RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT. This is a stern reminder of the changing values of the world today. This we uphold as a turn in the right direction.

This has been more than anticipated in the Buddhist theory of the Universal Monarch or Cakkavatti King who on being approached by subordinate rulers for political counsel, advises them on just rule which upholds morality in the land and makes no overtures at all towards any political restructuring.

These bring our deliberations on the subject Preservation and Fostering of the Buddhist Heritage to a close. In our study we have been both descriptive and prescriptive. We make an honest bid to be sympathetic and constructive. Please understand us in that spirit.

## Lesson 19

### Religion in the making of a Nation - Sri Lanka - an experience from the past for the guidance of the future

This paper is meant to be a historical evaluative study, related to a specific region, namely Sri Lanka, tracing back as far as possible to its discernible beginnings of more than twenty three centuries of the past.

#### **Introducing Buddhism's Attitudes and Approaches.**

Following in the wake of Buddhism, both as a religion and a philosophy, we are more than convinced that religion must indeed regulate and streamline the lives of men and women with regard to what they do here and now. And also with regard to what fashions and determines their lives in a hereafter. This is to us the indispensable element of religion. To us Buddhists, the concept of divine is not the major concern. What is vitally important is the transcendence from the mundane, from all ills of the world right now and for all times. It is with such a concept of religion that I present this paper.

This includes the people's religious and philosophical beliefs in a life beyond. Value judgements in their lives have to extend beyond their daily bread. What people do in their daily lives include their life styles - their search for food and drink and how they obtain them, how they bear and rear their offspring, even if they were of test-tube origin, their family and social relationships of individuals to one another, the patterns and modes of their governments, their attitudes to children and the females in particular, and not failing to mention the senior citizens and the religious clergy in their community.

Our title, Religion in the making of a nation - Sri Lanka, takes us unmistakably as far back as the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka during the reign

of King Devanampiya Tissa [circa 247 - 207 B.C.]. This covers a period of more than twenty-three centuries up to date. Among the many sources we have for the study of this history, the early Island Chronicles called the Dīpavaṃsa and the Mahāvaṃsa [compiled about the 5th century A.D.] occupy a very central place. These histories are not very different from similar productions of Japan like the Kojiki and the Nihongi. They blend a remarkable mixture of facts of history with delightfully romanticized myths and legends, grotesque at times though. In such a mythical and legendary garb, the Mahāvaṃsa presents the Buddha as making his first visit to the island of Sri Lanka, in the ninth month after his enlightenment [Mhv. Ch. I. v. 19 = *Bodhito navame māse ... Laṅkādīpaṃ upāgamī*]. According to the Dīpavaṃsa [Ch. I. v. 46], it is at a time when its original settlers were, more or less, stone age hunters, living in the wild. They are referred to here as yakkhas, who had not even mastered the art of generating fire and were therefore eating uncooked raw meat, dripping with blood [lohita-bhakkhasā]. Sri Lanka does carry in its ancient mountain caves, like those at Balangoda, evidence of these early inhabitants.

*Mahāvanaṃ mahābhīmaṃ ahū Laṅkātaḷaṃ tadā  
nānāyakkhā mahāghorā luddā lohita bhakkhasā.*

Dīpavaṃsa Ch. I. v. 46

It is for the historians, specially those of today who wish to meddle with history while maintaining their over-committed vested interests in their own fields of study like anthropology and sociology, to handle these allusions with professional ingenuity, as well as healthy and dignified detachment, sensibly understanding the tempo of a people for whom they were written. The author of the Mahāvaṃsa repeatedly says that he compiles his work for the sake of generating serene joy [*pasāda*] and emotional stirrings [*saṃvega*] in the minds of good people, i.e. people for whom the writings were intended [*sujaṇappasāda - saṃvegatthāya kate Mahāvāṃse*]. This refrain is recorded at the end of each chapter. Learn to read our history books, appreciating the spirit in which they

were intended to be read. Do not handle them like carcasses of dead animals in the hands of a butcher.

Our history writers are both aware and convinced of the main thrust of Buddhism as a carrier of culture. They record, as eye witnesses, the impact of Buddhism on the socio-ethical and cultural aspects of Sri Lankan life. They set the model for good and benevolent governance, either in democratic or socialist form [of monarchies or republics], they uphold rulers as loving guardians of the people who are under their care as envisaged in Buddhism. They view, in this part of the world, the agricultural development of the economy of the land as being basic, holding fast to the manifold aspects of righteous living as enunciated in the dhamma.

They would shun all forms of employment [*ājīva*] and economic development of a country which involves destruction of any form of life, does injury to human health or damage to environment. These would include rearing of animals for slaughter, production and sale of alcohol and drugs, manufacture of fire-arms, and debasing of human dignity through slavery and prostitution. Buddhism specifically forbids these. Policy makers at the highest level had to pay heed to as to what they could do and could not do, within their inherited cultural perimeter, mindful of the consequences on the people of the decisions they make. In this essay, we observe with great pride that Buddhism as a religion did, all the time, serve as a Vital Dimension of Statecraft.

We have no doubt that the Buddhist rulers endeavored to be fully alive to the instructions of the 'seven factors that arrest social decay' [*satta-aparihāniyā dhammā*] taught by the Buddha to the people of the Vajjian Republic [DN. II. 73-76]. In this connection we would refer you to the one book we know written on this subject so far, namely RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT, edited by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson - Oxford University Press, 1994. See particularly the references therein to Buddhism.

### **Pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka - its history and its pattern of culture.**

We have every reason to believe that prior to the official introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, people of this country must undoubtedly have had some acquaintance with the Buddha and his teachings. Sailing vessels both from the eastern and western sides of North India, and lands beyond them, must have touched at some of our sea ports like Māntoṭa or Mannar of today, on the western side of the island. There are records, supported by Chinese sources, to say that sailing vessels from Sri Lanka have undertaken long journeys of two to three years' duration to places like China, carrying goods and people. It is perhaps this earlier acquaintance with neighboring India which facilitated Thera Mahinda's missionary activities on his official arrival here.

The Chronicles do not present the earlier pre-Buddhist phase of culture of Sri Lanka as being of a very high order. It apparently had a long way to go. The semi-legendary accounts depict the island in its earlier phase as being inhabited by groups of primitive people. The common name by which these early inhabitants are referred to is often *yakkha*. Generally translated as demon, this word when used in the plural, is generally used to refer to people of a lower and inferior culture group. They are presented as being violent [*caṇḍā*], and fierce [*ruddā*]. They use words like *pisāca* and *rakkhasa* as being appropriate to refer to and describe these early inhabitants.

*Caṇḍā ruddā ca pisācā nānārūpavihesikā  
nānādhimuttikā sabbe sannipāte samāgatā  
tatha gantvāna tam majjhe  
vīmaṃsetvāna rakkhase  
nīharitvā pisācānaṃ  
manussā hontu issarā.*

Dīpavaṃsa Ch. I . vv. 47-48

The very names of their clan divinities like *Vyādha-deva* or the God-of-the-

Hunt is obviously indicative of the culture level at which they stood, well below a developed urban culture. Even *Vessavaṇa*, the ancient Indian king of the demon group [who also appears in early Buddhist mythology of India - See *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* at *Dīgha Nikāya* III. 194 ff.] features as an object of veneration of these ancient inhabitants of Sri Lanka. The *Mahāvamsa* mentions many more of these *yakkha* personalities, both male and female, who seem to have been venerated by the earlier settlers of the land. They obviously loomed large in the horizon of the Sri Lankans. They appear to be both native and foreign in origin.

*Kāḷavelaṃ nivāsesi yakkhaṃ purapuratthime  
yakkhaṃ tu Cittarājaṃ taṃ heṭṭhā Abhayavāpiyā.*

Mahāvamsa Ch. x. v. 84

*Antonarindavatthussa Vaḷavāmukhayakkhiṇiṃ  
nivesesi baliṃ tesam aññesañcānuvassakaṃ.*

op. cit. 86

*Mahāsusānāghātanaṃ pacchimarājiniṃ tathā  
Vessavaṇassa nigrodhaṃ  
Vyādhadevassa tālakaṃ.*

op. cit.89

### **Buddhism via Asokan missionaries**

#### ***vis-a-vis* the Sri Lankan scene.**

From this early period of rather primitive rural settlements, Sri Lanka seems to have made great headway towards the development of urban culture by the time of the arrival of Buddhism in the island. Cities, large and small, came to be built in natural succession. Skills in art and architecture were being liberally used. Urban life was getting integrated with rural living. The rulers and the ruled in the land appear to be developing closer contacts between themselves. Festivals at which people enjoyed themselves were becoming a regular feature in the lives of

the people.

The point of arrival of Thera Mahinda in Sri Lanka, bringing the message of Buddhism hither at the request of his father Emperor Asoka, is introduced in the Mahāvamsa in this manner.

"King Devānaṃpiya Tissa, having ordered his city folk to enjoy themselves in water-sport, himself went on the deer-hunt."

*Devānaṃpiyatisso so rājā salila-kīlitaṃ  
datvā nagaravāsīnaṃ migavaṃ kīlitaṃ agā.*

Mahāvamsa Ch. xiv. v.1

This report reasonably well indicates the high-water mark of urban culture and regal grandeur as assumed by the Sri Lankans at the time [at least at the time of compiling the Mahāvamsa in the 5th century A.D.]. The king himself appears to have inaugurated the festivities, asking the people to get down to water-sports. It is said that a considerably large number people followed on foot the king on his deer-hunt [We concede that the number forty thousand = *cattāṭṭisa-sahasseehi narehi parivārito* may be a fabulously exaggerated one.]. Festivals of all sorts like *nakkhattakeḷi* at which people enjoyed themselves were of regular occurrence. It was on such a day that Thera Mahinda arrived in Sri Lanka and encountered the king in the midst of festivities, particularly in his act of the deer hunt, with this apparent incompatibility with the incoming new wave of culture.

About this new wave of culture, with its worldwide impact, it is well worth noting here what Sri Jawaharlal Nehru has written in his great classic, The Discovery of India.

"Buddhism spread rapidly in India from Kashmir to Ceylon. It penetrated into Nepal and later reached Tibet and China and Mongolia. In India one of the consequences of this was the growth of vegetarianism and abstention from



alcoholic drinks.

Till then both Brahmins and *Kshatriyas* often ate meat and took wine. Animal sacrifice was forbidden."

[The Discovery of India p. 105].

### **The Sri Lankan stage - structural alterations.**

This is a coincidence of incalculable significance in the history of Sri Lanka: the visiting emissary of peace catching the recipient of the message at this end in an act of attempted destruction of life. This incident turned out to be epoch-making in Sri Lankan history. Mahinda was from the court of Emperor Asoka, bringing here the message of peace of the Buddha. Asoka himself, since he embraced Buddhism, had reduced the number of animals slaughtered even for the royal kitchen. The first precept of Buddhism's *pañcasīla* specifically prescribes against destruction of life [*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*].

This regard and respect which is required of the Buddhists towards all forms of life [*sabba-pāṇa-bhūta-hitānukampī*] and the consequent attitude of infinite friendship and love towards the whole world [*mettañ ca sabbalokasmimā mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam*] has therefore come to be the basis of all ethics, more or less universally. Any challenge to this, whether it comes via theology or religious practices, political ideologies or theories of economic development have to be looked upon, particularly by the Buddhists, as a blatant violation of justice in the living world. Any heedless destruction of life, anywhere for any reason, would reduce itself to the barbarism of the law of the jungle.

Buddhists, more than twenty-five centuries ago, shared this ethic of respect for all forms of life with the Jains of the day in their statement *Ahimsā paramo dharmah* which means Non-violence is the highest Ethic. Highlighting this theme, an American lady by the name of Victoria Moran brought out a publication entitled *Compassion The Ultimate Ethic* [1981-83], stressing the role of Jainism

and Buddhism towards this cause. Up to 1997 this book has run into five editions.

### **Self - righteous theologies.**

The disregard for this ethic manifests itself in many ways. At different stages in the history of religions, some religions try to make out, even today, that those who uphold a creed different to theirs have hardly a justification for continuance on this planet. This is the basis of holy wars, with a view to wiping out all others who are non-believers [arrogantly referred to as pagans and infidels]. Scarred and blood-stained human history, with manifest ruins of devastated religious monuments in the world, bears testimony to this. We pray that the saner world of humans today, shutting out the revengeful gods from our midst, puts an end to this.

Some among creationist theorists, even today, tend to believe that the animals in the world are a second thought product of the Creator, animals being put together for the use and benefit of his first grade creation of humans. Therefore those humans arrogate to themselves, through this ill-gotten religious sanction, the right to kill and eat at will what they believe was produced for them. They insist on believing that animal life in the world is what their Father in Heaven has gifted to them for their consumption.

Going beyond the area of food and clothing [clothing by way of skins of animals and furs etc.], provided by animals, these bigoted humans even exploit the animal world for their personal and private forms of entertainment like fox-hunting, deer-hunting and bull-fighting, these being only some among many aberrant forms of entertainment for humans. Fortunately most of these wild sports are now getting off the scene. Nevertheless, it appears as if we can never regain our balance, because in certain sectors, one time more civilized sports like wrestling are now descending to unthinkably low bestial levels even at public performances. All these mal-practices are none but evidence of the maladjustment of humans to the environment in which they live, their attitude to

the life forms in the world around them being tailored for them through their religious beliefs.

This is why we firmly believe that the Sri Lankan encounter with Buddhism more than twenty three centuries ago did turn out to be an epoch making one. King Devānaṃpiya Tissa of Sri Lanka, inheriting his elitist mode of royal life from somewhere, whether from Sri Lanka or from India we do not know, on that eventful day of Thera Mahinda's arrival in the island, set out on his annual royal deer hunt. He was caught red-handed by the Thera in the act. However, it must be noted here that the sportsman-like quality of the king is revealed with honesty in the Mahāvamsa [Mhv. Ch. xiv. v. 4] where it is said that he did not choose to shoot at an unsuspecting deer who was calmly nibbling the leaves of a nearby bush.

### **The dawn of a new day in Sri Lanka, with brave new thinking.**

The Thera, in a very brief conversation with the king, it is recorded, discovered the king to be one of very high intellectual caliber. Without much ado, the Thera delivered to him and his immediate retinue one of the most potent texts of Buddhist teachings, namely the Cullahatthipadopama Sutta [Majjhima Nikāya I.175-184]. It is a grand introduction to the teachings of the Buddha, not missing any of its salient points. Through this text and apparently with the help of accompanying explanations by the Thera himself, the king appears to have gained a thorough intellectual grasp of the new teaching. He became an ardent follower of Buddhism in every way.

The receptivity of the Sri Lankans, particularly of the ladies of the royal household, at grasping the fundamentals of the new religion, reveals an incredibly noteworthy high-water mark of Sri Lankan culture at the time. Princess Anulā, the wife of the king's younger brother Mahānāga, came with five hundred women to meet the Thera, on the second day, and listening to his sermons on the Petavatthu, Vimānavatthu and Sacca Samyutta is said to have attained the first stage of emancipation or *sotāpatti-phala*.

*Āgamma Anulā devī pañca-itthi-satehi sā  
there vandiya pūjetvā ekamantaṃ upāvisi.  
Petavatthu Vimānañ ca Saccasamyuttaṃ eva ca  
desesi thero tā itthī paṭhamaṃ phalaṃ ajjhagaṃ.*

Mhv. Ch. xiv. vv. 57-58

She is said to have pursued further her triumphs in spiritual development and informed the king that together with her five hundred ladies, she wished to join the higher religious life as nuns.

*Therānaṃ vandanatthāya devī tu Anulā'gatā  
saddhiṃ pañcasatitthīhi dutiyaṃ phalamajjhagā.  
Sā sapañcasatā devī Anulā'ha mahīpatiṃ  
pabbajissāma devā'ti rājā theraṃ avoca so.*

Mhv. Ch. xv. vv. 18-19

At this juncture, complying with the request of Princess Anulā, the king took very prompt action to facilitate the establishment of an order of Buddhist nuns [*bhikkhuni*s] in Sri Lanka. On the advice of Thera Mahinda, the king sent word to Emperor Asoka and invited Therī Saṅghamittā, i.e. Thera Mahinda's own sister, to come to Sri Lanka and perform the task of ordaining Anulā and her court ladies, in perfect conformity with the established Vinaya traditions. Saṅghamittā was accompanied by several accomplished Buddhist nuns of Indian origin who are specifically referred to as being young in years [*etā dahara-bhikkhuniyo Jambudīpā idhāgatā*. Dpv. Ch.xviii. v.12]. She also brought to Sri Lanka a branch of the sacred Bodhi Tree in India.

*Rucānandā Kanakadattā Sudhammā ca mahiddhikā  
bahussutā Saṅghamittā chalabhiññā vicakkaṇā  
catasso tā bhikkhuniyo sabbā ca bodhiṃ āharuṃ.*

Dpv. Ch. xvii. v.21

## **Dhamma learning and propagation in Sri Lanka.**

### **Women lead the way.**

Thanks to the vision and wisdom of the ruler of the land, within a very short period of time after the introduction of the new religion, Sri Lanka came to possess a dedicated and vibrant body of Saṅgha of both sexes, of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis. Buddhist learning and Buddhist living apparently went hand in hand. The young nuns who came from India were reputed students of the Vinaya, Dhamma and the Abhidhamma and they're reported to have recited these in the city of Anuradhapura.

*Vinayaṃ vācayim̐su piṭakaṃ  
Anurādha-puravhaye.  
Vinaye pañca vācesuṃ  
satta c'eva pakaraṇe.*

Dpv. Ch.xviii. v. 13

They obviously popularized and propagated the study of the Tipiṭaka, both in Anuradhapura and subsequently at Rohana too in the South -

*vīsati bhikkhunisahasseehi  
saha Rohanam āgatā.*

Ibid. vv. 21-23

As the Dīpavaṃsa repeatedly records, the knowledge of these nuns of the Tipiṭaka seems to have been all inclusive. They had mastery over a fivefold Vinaya, the five Nikāyas of the Sutta Piṭaka and the seven separate treatises of the Abhidhamma. There is also constant reference to their recital of the Five Nikāyas of the Sutta Piṭaka - *Nikāye pañca vācesuṃ* [Ibid. vv. 19, 33]. This stands in marked contrast to the subsequent Four Nikāya theory.

*Te ca Tepiṭakā bhikkhū Pañcanekāyikā pi ca Catunekāyikā c'eva  
Nāgasenaṃ purakkharuṃ.*

## Milindapañha - Trenckner, p. 22

This new theory seems to have emerged about the beginning of the Christian era, as a result of the expulsion of the Khuddaka Nikāya from the Suttanata Collection [Note Buddhaghosa's comment - *Suttantapiṭake catasso saṅgītiyo* - Sumangalavilāsinī - DA. I. p.14].

Almost on the introduction of the new religion to the land, precisely on the third day [*Tatiye divase therō ...* Mhv. Ch. xv. v.178] the ruler Devānaṃpiya Tissa was anxious to know from Thera Mahinda whether the Sāsana of the Buddha was by then firmly established in the land.

*Theraṃ upanisīditvā so pucchi'jinasāsanam  
Patitthitan nu bhante'ti. Na tāva manujādhipa.*

Ibid. v. 180

### **Religion guides the governance of the State.**

The answer to this being given by the Thera as 'the setting up of valid ecclesiastical boundaries or Sīmā,' the king immediately insisted that he should himself live within the ecclesiastical boundaries over which the Buddha's command prevailed. In other words, he expressed his desire to live under the jurisdiction of the religion of the Buddha :

*Sambuddhāṇāya anto'haṃ vasissāmi jutindhara.*

Ibid. v. 182

What we have endeavored so far is to show the intensity of the cultural impact Buddhism has had on Sri Lanka almost on its arrival here. The submission of the king as the ruler of the land to the authority of the religion - *Sambuddhāṇāya anto'haṃ vasissāmi jutindhara* - was already indicated above when he expressed his desire to live, literally, within the boundary of the ecclesiastical *Sīmā*.

At the level of the court, the new religion was obviously received with great relish and enthusiasm. We note with pride the reception it had from the court ladies headed by Princess Anulā. On hearing the Buddhist teachings, they went all the way to seek admission into the Bhikkhuni Order. It was a remarkable step forward in spiritual culture in human history, anywhere in the world. Determined and pledged to achieve it, they changed their social status into *upāsikās* [or nunhood aspirants] and lived in separate quarters specially built for them, awaiting the arrival of Therī Saṅghamittā to perform their ordination.

Thera Mahinda seems to have started his mission with tremendous success. Everybody who heard about his arrival in the land and his sermons to the king, flocked at the palace gate to see him and hear him preach.

Many city folk who heard about the greatness of the Thera on the previous day came to the palace gate and made a noisy announcement of their arrival. The king on hearing this, and realizing the inadequacy of accommodation within, arranged to have the elephant stable cleared and cleaned so that people may see the monks there.

*Hiyyodiṭṭhamanussehi sutvā theraguṇe bahū  
theradassanamicchantā samāgantvāna nāgarā  
rājadvāre mahāsaddaṃ akarum. Taṃ mahīpatī  
suvā pucchiya jānitvā āha tesaṃ hitatthiko.  
Sabbesaṃ idha sambādho.  
Sālaṃ maṅgalaḥatthino  
sodhetha. Tattha dakkhinti  
there'me nāgarā iti.*

Mhv. Ch.xiv. vv. 59-61

There seems to be very little doubt about King Devānaṃpiya Tissa's adoption of a Buddhist policy with regard to the governance of the country. In his pronouncement in no uncertain terms that he wishes to live, as the ruler of the

land, within the jurisdiction of the Buddha command [*saṃbuddhāṇāya anto'haṃ vasissāmi jutindhara*] exemplifies this attitude. This pledge on the part of the king to the Thera who now turns out to be the chief counselor on all matters both religious and secular, ultimately proves to be the most sane attitude even with regard to statecraft. It has been a regular theme of Buddhist teachings that all practices with regard to the governance of a state should primarily be based on and derive its inspiration from the concept of *dhamma* [Skt. *dharma*].

### **Statecraft and Spiritual Authority in Buddhism.**

The Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya [DN. III. 61] prescribes that the entire care and protection of people [*rakkhāvaraṇa-guttiṃ*] of all grades and ranks like the military, the civilians and the religious men in the land, and even birds and beasts [*miga-pakkhīsu*] should be based on the *dhamma*. The *dhamma* should provide the needed infrastructure for good government [*dhammādhīpateyyo dhammikaṃ rakkhāvaraṇa - guttiṃ saṃvidahassu*]. It is also envisaged in this context that good counseling from persons of religious maturity and religious integrity should be sought by rulers from time to time in order to be informed as to what they should do for the weal and welfare of the subjects. This immediately indicates to us that the culture of Buddhism looked upon religion as providing a very desirable dimension in statecraft.

It is a cause of serious lament that the English translations of this text [at DN. III. 61] in

1. Rhys Davids' Dialogues of the Buddha, Part III. [1921 and 1957], p.62
2. Maurice Walshe's Thus Have I Heard [1987], p.397 and
3. Long Discourses of the Buddha [1995], p. 397

have both equally well blundered, and blundered ver seriously, on this and reversed the spirit of this injunction. They call upon the ruler to correct the religious men. What a disastrous howler ! See what they say. What is the role of Buddhist scholarship, anywhere in the world, in situations like this?



Rhys Davids: ... and thou should'st deter them from evil and bid them take up what is good.

Maurice Walshe: ... and tell them to avoid evil and do what is good.

It is evident that from the very early years of the introduction of Buddhism to the island, King Devānaṃpiya Tissa strove to govern the country righteously well, working on an essentially Buddhist basis. Learning a very practical lesson from his initial blunder of the deer hunt, he seems to have turned, like his friend Asoka, in the direction of respect for all life - of all living things. Kings who succeeded him, within a period of less than two hundred years, began to show consideration for the life of animals. Ban on the slaughter of animals [*mā-ghāta*] came to be imposed from time to time.

Kings of Sri Lanka like Āmaṇḍagāmaṇī [79-89 A.D.], Silākāla [524-537], Aggabodhi IV [658 - 674] and Mahinda III [797 - 801], following this tradition of just kingship, ordered that no animals should be slaughtered in the land [*māghātaṃ kārayi dīpe sabbesaṃ yeva paṇinaṃ*. Mhv. Ch. xli. v. 30]. They also set up veterinary hospitals for the treatment of sick animals. It is undoubtedly owing to the benevolent influence of Buddhism that even fishes, birds and beasts, in addition to the religious personnel, the civilians in the land, his own kinsmen, and men in the armed forces came under the loving care of a king like Sena I [831 - 851].

*Bhikkhusaṅghassa lokassa  
macchānaṃ miga-pakkhīnaṃ  
ñātīnaṃ balakāyassa  
kattabbaṃ sabbaṃ ācari.*

Op. cit. Ch. xlviii. v. 97

Sanctuaries for animals, including 'safe pools' for fish in rivers and lakes became a common sight in the land. This is more to be viewed as a

magnanimous change of heart and a desirable change in the value systems of the Sri Lankans that came about as a result of the incoming new religion.

What we have indicated so far relates to the impact of the incoming religion on the life and thought of people of Sri Lanka, both the rulers and the ruled. There happened to be a clearly discernible change in the culture of the people. Religious beliefs, together with the practices that came to be followed, rose to a more rational and a commendably high standard of acceptance. The subjects seem to have very loyally and faithfully endeavored to fall in line with the pattern of life indicated by the king and the court.

Historically, the king turned out to be the protector and guardian of the religion. He literally became the Defender of the Faith. To rule the country successfully and justifiably well, the ruler had to have the backing and the guidance of the religion of the land. And he in turn had to be the defender of the faith. Buddhism unquestionably held this key position in Sri Lanka from the time of its introduction to the land. Buddhism was the gift officially sent to the king of Sri Lanka from the good neighboring kingdom of India.. The king was by duty bound to uphold and guard it. Much later in history, it is the same pattern in which Buddhism found its way from Korea to Japan.

### **Onslaughts on the new religion - ethnic and political.**

Let us now move on to make a special study of the ill-fated history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka within a century of its establishment. The very rapid and at the same time incessant process of acculturation of Sri Lanka which took place via the introduction of Buddhism to the island during the reign of Devānaṃpiya Tissa [247 - 207 B.C.], we would claim is a record anywhere in world history.

This, we would believe, is in a large measure due to the alignment and affinity of the vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka [who amount to nearly 70 percent of the total population even today] to the Ariyanized people of North

India. They were highly appreciative of this gift from the parent country. And also to the fact that during the reign of Emperor Asoka, a greater part of the Indian empire had tasted the sweetness of Buddhism as a peace-promoting international organ,

We also discover, and we have adequate evidence to accept and believe that this tremendous success in cultural growth of Sri Lanka in this part of the world, in a region with a geo-physical and more or less ethnic independence of its own, seems to have appeared to many ethnic sub-groups in the peninsular India of the Deccan a thorn in the flesh. To many of them, this may have appeared a threat to their survival for two reasons. The first is the emergence of a vast religio-cultural empire on both sides of their homeland of the Deccan, Sri Lanka being the new threat from the southern end. The other is, particularly after the Kalinga war of annexation of Asoka, the rise of Sri Lanka as a political power, on the southern edge of their homeland.

Early monastic literary and historical records of Pali Commentaries known as *Aṭṭhakathā*, the Pali Chronicles like the Mahāvamsa, and the village level popular records like the Rasavāhinī and the Sahassavatthu written in the Pali language, all know of the distressing episodes of regular invasions from the neighboring subcontinent.

They also must have entertained, on their own, expansionist political ideas of finding in Sri Lanka, as a growing up new political unit, new pastures for their own over-growing native populations. Sri Lanka, they would have very naturally believed, could possibly offer them more land for settlement of people, more opportunities for employment and more chances for acquiring wealth by whatever means, fair or even foul. Concentration of non-Sri Lankans [i.e. inhabitants of Dravidian or South Indian origin] we discover today in the more northern regions of the island clearly points towards this.

It is this vision of fulfillment of multiple needs and requirements which are

thought out in a very unjustifiable one-sided egoistic way that perhaps led, from time to time, to the infiltration into Sri Lanka of inhabitants of peninsular India. They did use force and come as invaders in groups of various magnitudes, large or small. Once within the island, they did use violence and rob, plunder and even kill to gain their own ends. Depending on the degree of their success, they even set up petty provincial power pockets and claim themselves rulers over the region or the community. Others did secretly smuggle themselves into the country, at a time when ideas of customs barriers and visa requirements did not exist in their present form, and ere long they did nativise themselves and become traditional inhabitants. Thus they come to possess claims for traditional homelands. Within a hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism, Anuradhapura came to be, in this manner, under the rule of a Tamil king by the name Elāra.

It is in this very complex situation of political ramification that disastrous threats to the newly established Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka were showing themselves up in many ways. The invader from the neighboring sub-continent seems, in the first instance, to have been keener and sharper on the destruction and elimination of whatever were the external mainstays of the new religion, of whatever they found to be physically present and visible.

The invaders seem to have worked on their mission of destruction with Machiavellian ingenuity. Speaking of these assaults on Buddhism in Anuradhapura, it is said that their main target was the Buddhist monk. Physical attacks were directed at him. They tore apart the robes the monks wore. Their begging bowls were plundered and damaged. The life of the monks, in the midst of this invading enemy was insecure.

The invader also ruthlessly attacked Buddhist places of worship like the Bodhi trees which they mercilessly cut down [*chindantā bodhipādape*] and the stupas which they seriously damaged by digging into them in search of treasures. This threat to Buddhism was not any less dreadful than the sword of

Democlese of classical mythology.

These acts of ethnic and religious bickering which were inflicted on the smaller island community of the Sinhalaes who were Buddhists by their neighbors would not have been, in the early stages, anything more than nibbling in the fringes. However, absence of retaliatory action on the part of the aggrieved Sinhalaes seems to have been apparently misjudged as weakness. It is through such gradual deterioration on account of gross neglect that Anuradhapura, as already referred to above, had fallen into the hands of the invader with Elara on the throne.

King Kākavaṇṇa Tissa of Rohana, Duṭṭha-gāmaṇi's father, had already sensed the danger of these movements of infiltration. He was no political imbecile. He was conscious of the need to safeguard the political integrity of this island country. This is one aspect of the threat which Sri Lanka was facing a generation before the time of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi [101-77 B.C.] There was yet another aspect of erosion or corrosion, by whichever name one calls it, on which no sensible ruler could have turned his back.

Around this time a cultural component of North Indian origin was firmly established in this island country through royal patronage. Through the patronage of this same monarch Asoka, Buddhism had reached the southern portion of peninsular India. We are well informed of the lines of communication on a Buddhist basis which Thera Mahinda established between Sri Lanka and South India.

History shows us that growth of religious power is as much a cause of envy and bitter hostility as the triumphs of political power. Through historical studies one can discover the vicissitudes of Buddhism in South India in the centuries that followed, almost to a point of total expulsion from that region. In this same line of aggression and encroachment came the attacks on the cultural achievements of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. See Mahāvamsa Ch. xxiii. v. 9 for attacks on the stūpas

and Rasavāhinī [K. Nanavimala ed. p.198] for the destruction of Bodhi trees and stūpas.

Professor Senarat Paranavitana writing in the University History of Ceylon Vol. I, Part II, p. 563 refers to this persistent pattern of assault and destruction that followed through the centuries as follows. "The Buddhist religion suffered great calamities during the Cola occupation and the extensive monasteries which flourished at Anuradhapura and other places in the tenth century were abandoned. The dagabas were broken into and valuables deposited in their relic-chambers were plundered."

To begin with, these activities appear like tactics of a frontier battle. But these, together with the expansionist movements which our early rulers like Kākavaṇṇa Tissa detected and discovered early turned out to be, in course of time, provocative enough for a major offensive. With a great deal of family assistance from the father and the mother for a truly national cause, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī inflicted a crushing defeat on Elāra. Mind you, this was not a war for political aggrandizement as was the Kalinga war of Asoka in India. Through this much needed war of defense, Gāmaṇī reclaimed and retrieved the lost position and prestige of the Sinhala and the Buddhists of the day. It is indeed in spirit a war of defense to rid the country of its menacing enemy who proved himself too disruptive and destructive for the growth of a unified culture and society in Sri Lanka.

### **The defense and consolidation of the Sri Lankan Heritage.**

Emerging from such a historical context, we are not surprised that Duṭṭhagāmaṇī had to take a firm decision to get down to action. There is not the slightest doubt that he had studied his brief very carefully and was confident of his line of prosecution. It had been well sensed and sorted out for him. Thanks to his father, the strategy was already known. The non-Buddhist, non-Sinhala hordes from the neighboring peninsular India had, in no uncertain terms, declared war on the Sri Lankans and their cherished culture, namely Buddhism

which had been gifted to them by Emperor Asoka from North India.

Asoka did send such missions simultaneously to many Asian countries around India like Sri Lanka, Burma, regions of Gandhara, Afghanistan, Iran etc. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the devastation which Buddhism and its adherents had to suffer within a couple of centuries after its introduction to the island, no matter whose interests it was intended to serve, had to be arrested forthwith. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī stepped in to do it, fearlessly and with a very clear conscience. It is not surprising that he had, more or less unanimously, the blessings of his subjects and unquestionably of the guardians of the religion.

Many historians, we believe, with inadequate evidence in their hands and pre-engaged opinions, as well as newer brands of students who label themselves with names like liberation sociologists, gather together these days for post-mortem studies on Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. Vested interests of diverse groups with their own ethnic, religious and political leanings have, in recent times, completely warped and distorted the available data on this subject. In this area of study, the mis-doings of academics, some times owing to unthinkably perverted loyalties as well as prejudices, and satanic alliances which people build up to serve their own ends, or to mis-guidedly support others' causes are blatantly clear.

### **Historical traditions warped and distorted.**

About what students of history and sociology like Walpola Rahula, Gananath Obeysekera, Bardwell Smith and others have to say, and we insist that they say very mischievously, about Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, we have already expressed our opinion in many places. Two serious critical studies on the subject by the author - 1. Texts and Traditions Warped and Distorted in the Narada Felicitation Volume published by Buddhist Publication Society in 1979 and 2. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī Episode Re-examined in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka in 1989 [*New Series, Volume XXXII*] can be had on request.

### **Reconciliation and recuperation.**

The triumph of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī over the aggressive invaders who were disruptive of the cultural stability and the peace of the island and the respect he is said to have shown to his fallen enemy appear to have contributed very much to the rebuilding of Sri Lanka's unity in the island. The two ethnic groups of the Sinhalese and the Tamils [Sinhalese and Tamils] seem to have subsequently resumed their process of building up peaceful co-existence in the island, respectful of each other's religious and cultural differences.

The major community of Sinhalese appear to have continued to absorb into their pantheon, with a remarkable degree of respect and reverence, Hindu divinities like Skanda, Ganesha and Pattini. With the Sinhalese, they became divinities of household veneration, with Gaṇeśha presiding over Wisdom [*Gaṇa-deviyo nuvaṇa denna*] and with Skanda promising to be a Bodhisatva, i.e. to be a future Buddha [*matu buduvana*]. The kings of the later Polonnaruva period even provided their queens of South Indian origin with temples for the worship of their Hindu divinities. Archaeological remains of the Polonnaruva period provide ample evidence of this.

### **Grandeur of Buddhism in Western Asia.**

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's success in the restoration of Buddhism to its premier position



of culture-generator in the island [of religion, civic responsibilities, economic development and arts and crafts], seems to have magnified Sri Lanka's image at world level. Buddhist communities in the Middle Eastern region of Western Asia, Afghanistan, Iran etc. who were Buddhists themselves by that time, seem to have been highly appreciative of these achievements in their neighbouring Buddhist world of Sri Lanka. It is said that when Gāmaṇī, after his glorious victory at home in restoring to Buddhism its unquestioned position of authority in the island, wished to epitomise it by building world-class monuments like the Brazen Palace or *Loha-prāsāda* and the Ruvanvelisaya or the *Mahā-thūpa* in the capital at Anuradhapura, visitors to the inauguration ceremony of the Ruvanvelisaya included renowned monks like Yona Mahā Dhammarakkhita from the Greek city of Alexandria [See Geiger's Mahavamsa Translation p. 194 n.3].

*Yonanagarā'lasandā so*  
*Yona-mahā-Dhammarakkhito*  
*thero tiṃsasahassāni*  
*bhikkhū ādāya āgamā.*

Mhv. Ch. xxix. v.39

It was at a time well before the beginnings of the Christian era when Buddhism had an international triumph in the Middle Eastern region of Western Asia. Buddhist learning had reached a high-water mark in those countries as is clearly evident from the very high grade works of Buddhist art found in places like Bamiyan and Hadda in Afghanistan even today [until the religious fanaticism of the Thalebans destroyed most of them very recently.]

Bringing before you a lesser known area of Buddhist influence on world culture, I quote Professor B.A. Litvinsky:

In the words of Barthold, "neither the Sassanian state nor its official religion, Zoroastrianism, ever comprised the entire Iranian world. In the later-period cultural life of the Iranian world, Buddhist Iran played a part of no less importance

than Zoroastrian Iran."

He states further:

"The above gives us grounds for radically reviewing the concept of the role played by Buddhism in the history of Western Turkistan civilization. In the course of more than 500 years, from the 1st - 2nd to the 7th - 8th centuries A.C. Buddhism and the associated elements of secular culture were an important component in the life of Western Turkistan society. Its impact did not come to an end with the Arab conquest and the spread of Islam. Buddhism offers a clue to the origin and essence of many phenomena of medieval ( Muslim ) spiritual and material culture,"

The problem of Western Turkistan Buddhism is actually part of the broader problem of the `Pre-Muslim' cultural heritage of the peoples inhabiting Western Turkistan today.

[Encyclopaedia of Buddhism - Sri Lanka IV. .151 f.].

Let these words go deep down in the minds of students of Sri Lankan history, whatever be their clan origin, sociologists or otherwise. Sri Lankans are heirs to a culture which even before the beginning of the Christian era has had a more or less worldwide impact, enriching the life of many a nation and providing a solid basis for the second phase of their cultural growth.

### **Sri Lanka - a healthy home for a Buddhist Renaissance**

Sri Lankans, more aptly called Sinhalas [That was the name by which they were known to the Chinese traveler monk Fa Hsien who visited Sri Lanka *circa* 5th century A.D. He wrote that name in Chinese as *Seng - chia - lo* = Sin - ha - la. The name is again translated into Chinese as *Shih - tse -Kuo* which means the Land of the Lion Offspring.] became very legitimately the custodians of the religion of the Buddha which was generously gifted to the island country by

Emperor Asoka. The Sinhala had to guard what was in their hands now. This does by no means imply that the Sinhala of Sri Lanka assumed that Buddhism is the monopoly of the Sinhala or that Buddhism does not exist outside Sri Lanka. Far from it. It is more than absurd even to insinuate such a thing. All that they were keen on doing was to safeguard what was their legitimate property and prevent it from falling into the hands of the vandals. They have already had, as indicated above, a glimpse of the possible calamitous situation towards which they were heading, with their own eyes. Once bitten, twice shy.

Sri Lankans, on all counts including demographic considerations, had to meticulously guard their religion and their culture. It was vital that the ruler of the land was also the defender of the faith of the people. So it was decreed that the ruler of the land had to be a Buddhist. This was a concept that grew very naturally within Sri Lanka from the very introduction of Buddhism to the island in the third century B. C. By about the 10th century, they even pushed it further and insisted that the ruler of the land had to be a Bodhisatta, i. e. a Buddha aspirant. Jetavanārāma slab inscription of Mahinda IV [956 - 972 A.D.] proclaims that "none but the Bodhisattvas would become kings of Sri Lanka" and that they "received this assurance - *viyāraṇ* - from the omniscient Buddha." [History of Buddhism in Ceylon by Walpola Rahula, p. 62]. This is nothing but the totality of cultural experience growing into the very life of a nation. No violence can alienate this from a people. Nor is there any justification for it.

### **World opinion on the Buddha and Buddhism.**

Finally let me wind up this paper with a few quotations from the Oxford University Press book of 1994 to which I have already referred above - RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT. I leave it to you to judge the validity of these statements and their relevance to thinkers in the world today.

Gotama was equally troubled by the baffling cacophony of religious answers he heard. To cope with this confusion, he advocated an approach to religion and to life informed by three simple principles: compassion,

"critical tolerance," and the wisdom that can come only from experience ( *prajna* ).

P. 272

His lifestyle eschewed fanaticism, and his teachings suggest that our stubborn desire to win the argument, to shape the other person to our preferences, and to be in control all spring from an ego that has not yet learned the disciplines of non-attachment and non-aggression.

loc.cit.

The story goes that just as Ashoka was feeling the pangs of regret that arose from the suffering he had caused by his far-flung conquests, he also heard the Enlightened One's teachings. As a result, he left behind his Hindu upbringing and became a Buddhist. He then went on to try to forge a kingdom in which the various religions could dwell together peaceably. Even more importantly, he decided that his commitment to the 'middle way' of the Buddha, although it allowed for self-defense, excluded all wars of aggression.

loc.cit.

Ashoka's career is important because it marks a turning point. In his lifework, the Buddha's demanding moral and spiritual teachings, which had previously been practiced mainly by monks because they were considered too difficult for those involved in the troubling ambiguities of governance, were shown to represent an ethic that could also guide public policy.

loc.cit.

However, there is also evidence to suggest that when religion is *appropriately* related to the public sphere it can contribute to healing.

op.cit. 273

Since Buddhists do not insist on belief in a deity as essential to their worldview, they may be in a better position than some other traditions to help a skeptical postmodern world in its struggle toward enlightenment. Further, Buddhism is able to enter into fusion and synthesis with other religious traditions more easily than many of its counterparts.

loc. cit.

The Buddhist idea of critical tolerance is likely to become increasingly significant in a religiously pluralistic world. Buddhism does not confuse tolerance with the uncritical acceptance of the other person's point of view. For Buddhism, tolerance represents that space from within which its own doctrines, as well as those of others, can be examined without prejudice on the basis of their inherent truth or value.

loc. cit.

Buddhism carries with it an ineradicable ethos - a unique core of teachings and values that usually, but not always, mandates a reasonable, temperate, and balanced approach to conflict... In any case, the ancient and supple wisdom of Gotama, who was troubled by the tragedies of the human condition and by the contradictory nostrums offered for its healing, is likely to continue offering a rich depository of insights for a long time to come.

loc. cit.

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